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THE  
RUSSIANS AND THEIR LANGUAGE

*In Preparation*

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

**RUSSIAN POETS AND  
POEMS**

FROM THE START TO THE PRESENT DAY

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# THE RUSSIANS AND THEIR LANGUAGE

BY  
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WITH AN INTRODUCTION  
DISCUSSING THE PROBLEMS OF PRONUNCIATION  
AND TRANSLITERATION

AND A PREFACE

BY

NEVILL FORBES

*Reader in Russian in the University of Oxford*

SECOND EDITION

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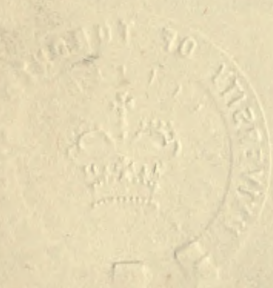
BROAD STREET

1916



TO MY FRIEND  
EDWARD STANHOPE KITCHIN, PH.D.  
TO WHOSE KEEN INTEREST IN  
THE PHILOSOPHY OF MY MOTHER-TONGUE  
THIS LITTLE WORK  
IS INDEBTED FOR ITS APPEARANCE

*First Edition, August, 1916.*  
*Second Edition, December, 1916.*





## PREFACE TO SECOND EDITION

ONE or two of the reviews which appeared in the Press when this book first came out three months ago contained some attempts to show that I am mistaken in not finding exact English equivalents for a few of the many Russian words discussed in it; yet it must be entirely due to the most encouraging general tone of my critics that the necessity of a second edition has appeared so quickly. I did expect to get nice letters from some "strangers"—students of my mother tongue (although many of these, too, surpassed my hopes!)—but the appreciation which I met in the English Press has given me a truly unexpected delight. My little work has been classified as "not a textbook, but literature" (*Review of Reviews*); it has been found "full of *prostòr*" (*The Morning Post*); and it has also been acknowledged by various leading papers as being "invaluable," "a splendid incentive to Russian study," "making the study alluring," "fascinating for an intelligent student," "a great boon on the many students of Russian," etc., and even apt to "help to bring about the time when English people will begin studying foreign languages seriously" (*The Times Literary Supplement*).

This last point has encouraged me to insert in the second edition a paragraph on the "Key-stone of the Russian Grammar" (p. 162)—*i.e.*, the two aspects of the Infinitive of our verbs, which I did not dare mentioning to my readers

at the first appearance of the book, the numbers 26 and 1,664 being, I must confess, somewhat alarming! But they only look so: no Russians, and no foreigners speaking Russian, realize the fact that they are commanding this lively swarm. I am absolutely sure that no one had ever thought of counting them up before; it occurred to me quite accidentally.

I hope my student-reader will find it an improvement to have the list of the Russian words at the end of the book rearranged in alphabetical order. Another two improvements (besides the corrections of some mistakes and giving some new details) are of a lighter nature—namely, the new paragraphs on “Cornflower and Tom-cat” (p. 158), and “The Metamorphoses of Aunt and Uncle” (p. 157). These are inserted in the place of my former discussion of the words *завѣтъ*, *завѣтный*—a point in which I give in: two of my critics have rightly suggested “message” for the noun (only!), and a conversation with a keen, literary Scotchman lead us to the corresponding adjective—“hallowed.”

With regard to the other point or two of contradiction on the part of the otherwise delightful reviews, I am afraid I cannot see anything but . . . just a shade missing in the appreciation of the details of my explanations; my apologies—but no giving in another half-step of my Russian ground!

There must be many English words of which I have no idea; but then, they do not belong to the familiar, everyday, homely English speech; while the terms which I discuss are parts of the *fundamental element, the very heart of the Russian speech: this is the firm ground on which my points are based.* If the words “cordiality,” “demonstrativeness,”

“the Blue Book” (as an adjective epithet), and “tact” were in constant use in English conversation as standing exactly for *привѣтливость, часка, казенный* and *чуткость*—then I would have to admit my lack of knowledge! But you can live half a year in England and not hear the word “cordiality”; and three years without hearing “demonstrativeness” or “Blue Book”; while in Russia you could hardly live through one week without hearing the terms I am trying to explain. Are, then, these English “equivalents” really equivalents?

With regard to *chòtki, chùtkost'* (*чуткий, чуткость*), the futility of replacing them by “tactful” and “tact” becomes obvious as soon as you know that a horse is called *chutki* if, for instance, it will not go quietly by a place on a peaceful country road where blood had been shed (I have known such cases); or that it is *chùtkost'* on the part of a publisher to find out and to “give a lift” to unknown, shy, disheartened young authors!

I was also very much interested by a friendly remark that I am “slightly—just a little bit—under-rating the intelligence of the English. . . .” At hearing this first, I felt instinctively sorry and inclined to tone down that particular vein of my book which seems to make the impression of my being unjust. But further discussions cleared up the point: I was told that “the English public *would* understand all the subtleties and peculiarities of the Russian speech quite well if these had been interpreted to the readers by the translators.” . . . Well—surely the translators are English too? And what is more, in varying degrees, *literary* English? Why don't they interpret everything if both they themselves and the English readers could easily get at the very essence of our language?

Why they do not apply all the wealth of their own mother tongue—this I do not know: excepting the *Westminster Gazette*, my queries (pp. 115 and 147) have been somewhat unaccountably neglected even by the most generous and attractive of my reviewers. But, why they (the translators) simply omit that certain essentially Russian element of the originals—this I do know, and I stand up for the hard-placed English translators: because it cannot be interpreted otherwise than by long, round-about, exhaustive explanations. And this is exactly what I have tried to do—so I cannot very well see where I am unfair on the English intelligence! Still, it is a great pity if my writing appears to some a *generalization*. And it is a great pleasure that the overwhelming tone of the judgments I hear and read is quite in unison with mine.

The English words untranslatable into Russian are of a somewhat different nature to the untranslatable Russian ones; and I am naturally dealing chiefly with those essentially Russian terms and expressions, as my desire was to throw in this way some light on the national psychology of my country.

N. JARINTZOV.

## PREFACE TO FIRST EDITION

THE appearance of this volume at the present moment is so apposite that any prefatory or explanatory remarks are really superfluous, all the more so that the authoress is already known in this country by her excellent writings on Russia which have appeared in the course of the last few years. It has, however, been suggested that something may be usefully said as to some purposes which, amongst others, this book may serve. In the first place, it is something really new, being an exposition of Russian psychology illustrated by examples of the Russian language. One often hears said by those who have read translations of Russian works, or books written in English about Russia, that they do not yet understand Russian psychology. To that it may be answered that it *is* very difficult to understand Russian psychology without knowing, at any rate, something of the Russian language. Translations of Russian books are sometimes inexact, and books about Russia are sometimes one-sided. The fact that this book on Russia, Russian, and Russians is written by a Russian in English endows it with the authority of an original, and saves it from the tedium and incorrections of a translation. The authoress has lived long enough in England to know what is both interesting and unintelligible to English readers, and has lived long enough out of Russia to be able to look at her country and countrymen objectively and to appreciate fully the value and beauty of her own language; at the same

time she is still able to write sufficiently subjectively to be inspiring, and sufficiently broad-mindedly to be convincing. In this way, with the aid of the numerous quotations from such authors as Gogol, Dostoyevski, and others more modern, the book will appeal to those who are interested in Russian literature and psychology, but have no time or inclination to study the language; written in an engaging and conversational style, it brings certain interesting and illuminating aspects of the Russian character and language to them in their armchairs, as it were.

In the second place, the book will be directly useful to the rapidly increasing number of people in this country who are actually studying the Russian language. The many aptly chosen linguistic examples and their explanations and interpretations which illustrate the book go a long way towards providing a Russian syntax very attractively disguised, and will help to impress certain remarkable characteristics of the Russian language on the minds of students more effectively and pleasantly than the arid pages of grammars and textbooks are wont to do.

Although differing somewhat radically from the authoress in certain points—amongst others, of pronunciation and the vexed problem of transliteration (and therefore it may be hoped not to be suspected of collusion)—the writer has no hesitation in saying that for serious students of the Russian language, literature, and psychology, the present work, being, as it is, a sort of concentrated essence of Russia, is equal in value to half a dozen of the large books on that country which have latterly been so plentifully showered upon us.

NEVILL FORBES.

## INTRODUCTION

### DISCUSSING THE PROBLEMS OF PRONUNCIATION AND TRANSLITERATION

EDUCATED English people seem to be interested nowadays in Russian literature. Happily, there exist some translations which convey the general meaning of the originals very well indeed—like those by Mrs. Edward Garnett and a few others. But even they could not possibly transfer the atmosphere of the Russian speech, its beautiful subtlety, or its extreme analytical power. These have no equivalents in modern English (nor in other modern languages, but my little study partly concerns the comparison between the Russian and the English speech only). Hence the gaps in the best of translations; and hence the appearance of these pages, the aim of which is to show that those who want to understand the *Russian national character* and to grasp the beauty of Russian literature, should try and learn the original Russian speech. Let not the difficulty of pronunciation stop anyone. Firstly, we are not so particular on a foreigner's pronunciation as a Cockney or an English labourer are on the 'exact' pronunciation of English! I hope those who have visited Russia have had the opportunity to notice that we are capable of 'catching a word on its flight,' as we say. Secondly, it is chiefly not the sounds themselves, but that logical flexibility of our

language which we would love to introduce to all the world—but cannot, for the lack of a medium.

Much of the following in the main part of this book will startle a casual reader as bad English—but this is just the point: there *exists no good* English for many a conception which I want to convey from the Russian! The only way I can suggest is for the reader to try and detach his mind from the usual modern English and to try and penetrate with it into the attitude of the Slavonic mind. This may be worth while trying for those who really want to investigate this mental attitude; because the mechanism of thinking, the process of thought itself, reflects of course the nature of a nationality just as much as its politics and customs do. And a patient reader will, perhaps, get an additional glimpse into the *national Russian mind* through seeing the possibilities which are open to the Russian speech.

What is discussed in this book beyond the preface is not included in Russian grammar- and text-books. The complexity of our syntax is naturally such a matter of course to us, that the branching off of its nuances strikes one only when one is confronted with the task of explaining them to a foreigner. If it were not for my wonderful English friend to whom this book is duly and gratefully dedicated, and who has a regular 'flair' for tracing the beauties of every language and takes a rare interest in it, I should never have been struck by all the subtlety of the Russian one, notwithstanding all my love for it. It is only thanks to our studies with him and to his knowledge of the philosophy of the old and modern languages, that the pearls of the Russian one rose for me from its sapphire deep.

I hope that perhaps some of the Russian subconscious mind will reveal itself in each of these little pearls to the eyes of my English reader and will make him see that



learning our language in the original is worth the energy it requires; especially for those who are really interested in the Russian land itself: for I must repeat that this little work is not a formidable theoretical essay in comparative philology, but a *sketch of the Russian national psychology as reflected in the language*.

But I hope it will also be helpful as a character-sketch of the language itself to all those who have already begun studying it—and may even arouse some interest in the minds of those who have not yet considered this somewhat exciting occupation

Meanwhile, the Introduction itself is meant only for those to whom the idea of learning Russian is no more strange; and all that follows in it should not be considered as generally readable material, but only as an offer of some help to the actual students.

The only way for an English person to really grasp the quaint, characteristic beauty of the Russian literature is to study the language in the original. But not through grammars and text-books only: they suffice to frighten anyone away! These booklets with the pronunciation authoritatively fixed by their non-Russian authors<sup>1</sup> drive even a Russian crazy: what can, then, be expected from the unfortunate English 'self-scholar'!

There are enormous difficulties in conveying the exact Russian sounds by means of the Western (Romance) characters, and I cannot help making a big point of it. The nature of the two alphabets coming from different sources<sup>2</sup> is reflected respectively in the two spheres of sound—so different, that the two languages (English and Russian) cannot be said to have a common denominator. Therefore the transliteration is rather like investi-

<sup>1</sup> Like, for instance, C. A. Thimm and J. Marshall's *Russian Self-taught*.

<sup>2</sup> The Russian alphabet comes from the Greek, *via* Old Slavonic.

gating the laws for prime numbers, subject of which is full of pitfalls for the unwary.

These insurpassable difficulties account for the fact that there exist *no two persons*—one of them Russian and another English—knowing the two languages equally well—who would entirely agree on the details of transliterating Russian into English (or the other way round). I think that only practical, careful oral instruction given by genuine Russians can start the English ear and pronunciation on the right road. There are a few exceptions amongst non-Russian people, of course, who can do it almost reproachlessly—and they should be admired!

Meanwhile, this little work is not meant to be anything like a text-book, but one interesting for a general reader—though more or less philologically inclined; therefore I prefer not to squeeze our Russian words into the exclusively English spelling more than it can be helped: all vowels in my Russian verbal illustrations are represented by the Italian vowels, and not by the exclusively English ones. Also, with the consonants, *s* always sounds an original *ss* (as in *sun*, but never otherwise); again, *z* always sounds as in *zeal*, and never as in *azure*, and is never represented by an *s*; the *j* stands for the French sound in *je* (instead of replacing it by the *zh*); and *h* also stands for its sound alone, instead of using the clumsy and unfair *kh*! I do so with the instinctive Russian habit of putting *one* letter for *one* sound (as we always do in our alphabet) whenever possible—instead of increasing the genuine number of letters in the Russian words. When talking about the Russian language, English people always exclaim: ‘Oh, those awful endless words!’ But the fact is that they are made longer in appearance by applying the English spelling, which does not contain a sufficient number of single letters for various sounds.

Ask some genuine Russian to tell you slowly and distinctly the Russian words for: soap, dust, soap-bubble, a far way, to be in exile, height (the poetical form of the word), cod-liver oil, to climb, to howl, the decrease, a white forehead, my dear (beginning with the letter M), to wash, ripple, dismal life, wrath, etc.<sup>1</sup> He will find it utterly impossible to write them down for you in English letters, whilst you will find it equally impossible to pronounce these words after him on the spur of the moment—unless Russian was the first language you heard round your cradle, or unless you have spent many, many years in Russia, or have a philological genius innate in you (which is not often the case: personally, I have found only one scholar-specialist of the last description in the course of many years of residence in England).

The cause lies in the close succession of very hard consonants and very dark vowels, with consonants so soft and vowels so light that almost no Western ear or tongue seems to be able to master it without energetic practice. Particularly unconquerable appears to be the hard, indescribable vowel which is vainly represented in English by *i*, and *y*, and *w*, and *ü*, and what not! It is pronounced approximately as *i* in *bit*, only much deeper and darker. Next in difficulty come the soft *t*, *r* and *l*, and especially whole words consisting exclusively of soft consonants and light vowels<sup>2</sup>: *t'ep'er'* = now, *d'et'i* = children, *z'el'en'* = the green, *r'ab'* = ripple, *t'em'en'* = darkness,

<sup>1</sup> Here are these Russian words transliterated in the nearest possible way, which is explained and suggested in this Preface: *Mýlo*, *pyl'*, *mýl'ny puzýr'*, *dál'n'i put'*, *byt' v ssýlke*, *vys'*, *ryb'i jir*, *làzit'*, *vyt'*, *úbyl'*, *b'èly lob*, *m'ily*, *myt'*, *zyb'*, *unýlaya jizn'*, *zlost'*, etc. For original Russian spelling see the list of Russian words at the end of the book.

<sup>2</sup> I am applying the now adopted system of marking the soft (palatalized) Russian consonants by putting a small comma at their top corner.

*vz'at'* = to take, *n'ed'el'a* = a week, *zd'es'* = here, *st'ep* = steppe, *l'ubov'* = love, *os'* = ax, *l'ud'i* = people, *t'ech'* = a leek, *pr'el'est'* = delight, *d'en'gi* = money, *d'es'at'* = ten, *p'er'el'et'et'* = to fly over, *dr'an'* — an untranslatable definition for everything utterly valueless and wicked (the nearest to it in English is rubbish, but it is impossible to call an English person 'rubbish,' whereas this Russian definition clearly condemns a person's *wickedness*: 'He is an awful rubbish!' is the worst Russian characteristic one can think of—with the exception of *podl'ëtz*, which stands approximately for the English 'cad').

To express these sounds in English letters is an almost insurpassable problem to us. That is why so many Russian names now known in the West of Europe are spelt in different ways; we ourselves cannot find exact equivalents for our sounds even when we are well acquainted with the groups of Teutonic and Romance languages, and we are quite prepared to listen to our names and to see all sorts of Russian words—as disguised by the foreign spelling and pronunciation!

And how could this be otherwise? With nearly all the Russian consonants there exists another, a soft (palatalized) way of pronouncing them as well, which is commanded by the light vowels or by the 'soft sign' following them. It makes all the difference to the meaning of certain words—the way their final consonants are pronounced, hard or soft: thus, *brat* means 'brother'—while *brat'* means 'to take'; *von!* means 'go away!'—while *von'* means 'stink'; *mol* means 'breakwater'—while *mol'* means 'moth'; *krov* means 'shelter'—while *krov'* means 'blood'; *pyl* means 'ardour'—while *pyl'* means 'dust,' etc., etc.

The soft consonants *d'* and *t'* can be found in Europe outside the group of Slavonic tongues only in the Hungarian. The Spaniards, Portuguese, and Italians follow

us in their soft *l* and *n*—but not at the end of the words, which is constantly the case in Russian.

Our *l*, even in its hard form, is not the English *l*; it is not the gentle English *l*, but a richer sound: it is either so hard that a Westerner breaks his patience against it if he does not care to practise; or it is so elusively tender, that—at first hearing it—he finds himself completely baffled.

There are 32 pronounceable letters<sup>1</sup> in the modern Russian alphabet, for we not only have more sounds than the Westerners have, but we also have a special single letter for each different sound, and have therefore no need of the French, English, German, Hungarian (and even Polish) manner of grouping letters in order to define one special sound—like *ch, sh, ts, ou, ai, ea, eu, oo, ee, kh, tch, sch, cz, sz*, etc. That is why our words when spelt in English look as if they had such a number of letters in them, simply because it takes two or three ordinary English letters to give something approaching one Russian sound. In fact, the general character of the Russian spelling must be defined by ‘one sound = one letter.’<sup>2</sup>

On the other hand, some of the Western sounds do not exist in Russian; for that reason some of us cannot pronounce them, and no one can spell them correctly in Russian: the French *oe, u*, and nasal *n*, the English *th, u* (as in ‘but,’ ‘under,’ etc.), *ing* and *wh*, the swallowed French and unborn English *r*—as these sound to us—compared to our clear and clattering *rrrrr*, whether hard or soft!

<sup>1</sup> The 33rd and 34th are only the ‘hard sign’ and the ‘soft sign,’ soundless in themselves; and another two characters are the obsolete varieties of *f* and *i*, which represent a meaningless survival at the bottom of our A B C; they enter into the spelling of a few ecclesiastical words only, and should be neglected instead of augmenting the difficulties for an ordinary student.

<sup>2</sup> If anything, there are four Russian vowels and one consonant which contain two sounds in one sign. This will be explained presently.

Nor do we have the Latin or Teutonic medium *l*. Naturally, therefore, when it comes to a Russian trying to write down in his own language the names of Underwood, or Thomson, or Whithcombe, their owners have every right to be dissatisfied. In fact, only few English words can be transliterated into Russian without having their genuine English sounds disguised. The difficulty is mutual.

We have no letters included in the spelling which are not to be pronounced—like the French endings for the plural or the *aient* in the imperfect tense; or the English *e* as in the words note, rope, nose, etc. The only two letters which are not pronounced in Russian are not meant to stand for any sounds in themselves, they are only the ‘hard sign’ and the ‘soft sign’—specially to indicate whether the preceding consonant is to be pronounced hard or soft. And even then the hard sign has been found superfluous, and many children are taught now-a-days to omit it at the end of words ending with a hard consonant. But the soft sign remains indispensable. Its influence—especially with regard to the transliteration problem—is so important that I must dwell on it with special attention:

1. The soft sign *ь* can be placed between two consonants: ма́ленький (small) *mal'en'ki*; да́льний (distant) *dal'ni*; or in a number of shortened names: Ва́ська (from: Basil), Пе́тька (from: Peter), Ко́лька (from: Nikolày), etc.

2. Or after a consonant which is the last letter in the word: бо́ль (pain) *bol'*; о́сь (ax) *os'*; ко́рь (measles) *kor'*; ко́нь (steed) *kon'*; спа́ть (to sleep) *spat'*, etc. In each of these cases—and their name is legion—the soft sign renders the preceding consonant *soft* (palatalized), which makes all the difference to the nature of its sound and thus may even alter the meaning of the whole word, as has been mentioned before (p. xii). Yet this is simple enough, and in all such cases the effect of the soft sign

can be easily interpreted by the adoption of the little comma at the top corner of the corresponding consonant of Latin origin, as it is done throughout this book. This little symbol is *equally efficient, and should be always applied for pointing out a consonant palatalized by the influence of the following light vowel*: небо (sky) *n'ebo*; пѣть (to sing) *p'et'*; теперь (now) *t'er'er'*; люди (people) *l'ud'i*; сѣсть (to sit down) *s'est'*, etc.

Here I want to point out that the Russian vowels distinctly fall into two groups, each dark vowel having a corresponding light one:

а	э	ы	о	у	being the dark ones; being their correspond- ing light ones.
я	е or ѣ <sup>1</sup>	и or і	ѐ	ю	

Well, everyone of the *second set* affects the preceding consonant, *rendering it soft—and itself mostly turning into its corresponding dark variety*. Thus, if you pronounce the Russian word for 'name'—*имя*—but *go on voicing* its last sound—you will find that it is an *a*; but it has done its bit, having turned the hard *м* into a soft one (while, if you call out in that same way *мама*, you will notice that the *м* has remained hard). The same thing happens in numberless cases, such as: *пяты́й, тяжёсть, тѣло, дѣло, съѣлъ, вѣсь, мѣль, ёлка, пѣсь, благодарю, сюда*—etc. The turning into the corresponding dark vowel does not so frequently take place in the case of *e*, and never with the *и* or *і*. But their effect on the preceding consonant remains just the same, so that, for instance, the letter

<sup>1</sup> Many Russian words contain this variety of a light *e*. There is no difference whatever in the sound between the two. Grammatical rules command the choice between *ѣ* and *e* in the spelling of terminations, but a great number of words contain a *ѣ* in their stem, and in these cases can be learned only through practice. A witty remark runs, that *ѣ* exists in order to distinguish educated people from illiterate ones!

т in ты (thou), *ty*, sounds hard, but in тихо (gently) *t'ihó*, it is palatalized by the и which is the light sister of the dark ы. Or, the л in лунá (moon) is still harder and deeper than a good Scotch *l*, while in люди (people) *l'udi*, or in люблю (I love) *l'ubl'u*, it sounds, as it were, on the opposite side of the medium Romance *l* which can be taken as the central one in the little scale:

Л	L	ЛЬ
(Russian)	(Romance)	(Russian).

Everyone who can master these three shades of *l*, voicing them on the same continuous note and just altering the position of his tongue (from pressing its point to his teeth only to pressing the whole of it close to the roof of his mouth), is sure to master the Russian pronunciation straight away! . . .

Well, perhaps another little practice is equally efficient as a test: namely, a parallel to the above scale:

БЫТЬ	Bit	БИТЬ
(Russian for manners of life)	(English)	(Russian for beaten)

Only, Russian proceeds in this case to a still further degree of softness and winds up this scale by *бумъ* (b'it').

The next exercise would be to repeat the two following Russian words with the English one between them as a stepping-stone:

ЛОТЬ	Lot	Лётъ
(Russian for half-ounce.)	(English)	(Russian for flight)

Really, you can start quite bravely, if your ear and tongue will master these two hardest tests! Now we can



proceed with the soft sign, and mention the third way in which it can be applied.

3. When a soft sign following a consonant is in its turn followed by a vowel.

It is only the vowels of the light set that can follow it at all. Now, these *light vowels*, when standing at the beginning of a word, or when preceded by another vowel, by hard sign or by soft sign, have the sound of an English *y* running into them. Thus, in ель (pine tree), the Russian *e* sounds as in *yes*; the same in жаркое (roast meat of any kind) *žarkoye*; in внимáние (attention) *vnimaniye*; in объединéние (the uniting) *obyed'in'eniye*; in варенье (jam) *var'eniye*. But, when preceded by a consonant, that same letter *e* has no *y*-sound running into it at all, nor has the Ё. Thus мѣлъ (chalk) *m'el*, or in тѣло (flesh) *t'elo*, or in тепло (warm) *t'eplo*, or in нѣтъ (no) *n'et*—it palatalizes the consonants м, т, and н respectively (itself turning into its corresponding hard-vowel-sound э), but without getting the *y*-sound, with which it does begin under circumstances just mentioned above. Exactly the same rules refer to the rest of the light vowels: thus, юность (the time of youth), or мою (mine, *in fem. accusat.*), or пью (I drink), sound: *yunost'*, *moyu*, *pyu*; but тюльпáнь (tulip) has none of the *y*-sound in it which it has in English—and the letter ю only does its business in rendering the т soft. So it does in рюмка (wine-glass), in дюжина (dozen), etc.

Only the и, amongst the light vowels, makes a slight exception: there are only three words beginning with it in which it has the *y*-sound to start it with; these are the genitive, dative, and ablative cases of the Russian word for 'they' = они́: ихъ (of them), имъ (to them), and ими́ (by them), *yih*, *yim*, *yimi*. In all the rest of the Russian words beginning with an и the latter (against the nature of other light vowels) has no *y*-part in it:

игóлка (needle) *igolka*; и́ва (willow) *iva*; идт́и (to go) *idt'i*; etc.

All this only leads us to my eventual aim—namely, the rôle of the soft sign when standing between a consonant and a soft vowel: семья́ (family), се́мьи (families), соловьи́ (nightingales), пла́тье (dress). It is the joined effect of this little trio that causes the last vowel to assume its *y*-sound again, although there is a *consonant* before it. In other words, when the soft sign stands between a consonant and a vowel, the comma at the top corner of that consonant is not sufficient—as it would not convey the idea of the *y*-sound running into the vowel; and *this effect, caused by the presence of the soft sign, should be represented in transliteration by the English y, distinctly pronounced as a y too.* Thus, words like the examples just given above should be spelt *semyā, semyi, solovyì, plàtye*, etc.

‘This has been always done!’—I hear the attentive scholar exclaim. Yes—but my point goes further.

This also has been always done where there is *no* soft sign after the consonant and therefore *no y*-sound in the Russian word at all—and that is wherein the mistake lies, because it makes all the difference between genuine Russian pronunciation and a substitute for it. Russian words having *no ь* between their consonants and light vowels (and therefore *no y*-sound), like баня, батюшка, или, море, люди, тебѣ and so forth, are always transliterated as *banya, batyushka, ilyi, morye, tyebye*, and so forth. I can't help calling this entirely wrong—whether introduced by English or by Russian authors! It either indicates a lack of good hearing, or else, merely the desire to save trouble. I am too keen in my desire to help the English students to learn *good* Russian, and therefore must draw their attention to this point, which is overlooked in all text-books I know. This

omission gives no chance whatever to distinguish the two *different* sounds in the Russian original: on the one hand, the *presence of a y-sound caused by the presence of a soft sign*, and on the other—*entire absence of a y-sound where there is no soft sign*. However difficult it seems at first to an English ear and tongue to catch this difference, it soon becomes clear (from good oral instruction); because the mere grouping of a softened consonant with a light vowel (with *no soft sign* in between) represents an *absolutely close succession of the two*, shoulder to shoulder, as it were, *without any y-sound link* between them. Therefore the above-quoted examples (copied from dictionaries and text-books) ought not to be spelt as they are—*i.e.*, in a wrong way—but: *bán'a*, *bát'ushka*, *ìli*, *mòr'e*, *l'ùd'i*, *t'eb'e*, and so forth.

Most unfortunately, the *y* has been given the task to represent the darkest of all vowels ы as well as и—besides being the only means to interpret the effect of the soft sign. But this is not my fault, and I cannot invent an absolutely new letter to stand symbolically for that peculiarly Slavonic sound. For the same reasons no manner of transliterating the terminations ы́, ые, ыя can be consistent.

Perhaps it will be of some use if I give here the Russian alphabet as it will be transliterated in this book, and as its sounds can be possibly conveyed to the ear of my reader in the above-explained ways. Only, I shall not strictly keep to its original order. I can see no help in, and no necessity for doing so whatsoever; while a certain grouping of the characters may turn out to be helpful in memorizing them.

But just a few lines, first, about that wilful little imp in the Russian language—the stress, the accentuating of one certain syllable in every word. There is no vestige of a rule or uniformity about it! It falls on any

part of the word it *will* choose. There are not more than a score of words in which the stress is not strictly attached to one certain syllable—and even then it is mostly the difference between the beautiful pure speech of the north and centre of Russia, and its horribly corrupt variety of the far south, round the shores of the Black Sea. (I do not mean the independent dialect of Little Russia, Ukràyna; the latter is almost as different from Russian as Polish is.) The stress may fall on the stem of a word, or on its prefix, or even on the termination: *zvùki*=sounds; *òtzzvuki*=reflected sounds; *màlo*=a little; *malovàto*=rather too little! *vodà*=water; *vòdy*=waters; *mòr'e*=sea; *mor'à*=seas.

So it flutters about in its own obstinate manner, like a butterfly—without leaving the foreigner much chance to catch it on the ground of any theories; what is more, we possess no nets to offer him for the purpose!

But once he has got hold of the stress in a certain word he must hold it fast; because you may slide over any syllables in speaking Russian—except those with the stress falling on them: they stand out high above the rest, and our national dislike for monotony is distinctly reflected in this characteristic feature of our speech.

One of the worst defects in the Russian as spoken by the foreigners is, that they don't put weight enough on the accentuated syllables; whilst it is so natural and so essential for us to do so, that I know cases when babies, in beginning to speak, started a somewhat extraordinary language of their own: they picked out just *those syllables* from the grown-up people's speech, which had the accent on them! Now, the Russian language has not as many one-syllable words in it as the English—by far less; so it was for several months that these babies' monologues could not be understood by anyone except their mothers. Nevertheless, all these difficulties can be conquered by

English people—who have a will to learn, a little capacity, and some genuine Russian person to guide them. But a really well-speaking Englishman who has *lived* in the centre or north of Russia is a better teacher than a Russian from the far south—and, especially, better than a Russian Jew. I must be fair to my subject and say that even amongst the well-educated, intellectual Jews in Russia there are very few who speak without a specific accent of their own—guttural and nasal—which is decidedly absent from the clear, open Russian speech. They speak Russian much worse than they speak English.

The Armenians, too, can be detected by their first phrase spoken in Russian: their manner is to put broad, heavy stresses on each syllable, unheedful of any soft and light sounds, and turning them all into a kind of good-natured, deep barking!

The Finns produce a chain of short, dry, colourless syllables, as if chopping meat—and giving, somehow, the impression as if the Russian were littered with millions of *tt*-s and *pp*-s!

As it can be seen, all these accents rob the genuine Russian speech of one of its characteristic ingredients: the extreme delicacy of sound; the melting softness.

The Poles have an accent of their own, of course. The softness and delicacy do not baffle *them* (except, sometimes, with the palatalized *r*). But they take our *hard l* and turn it into the sound of a *w* (as it sounds with their language).

By the way, I know a Polish girl in England who has no accent whatever (although she speaks with half-closed lips, *unlike* the Russians) and who gives excellent instructions in Russian; well, she tells me that she almost begins her teaching each time by insisting that her pupil should grasp the difference (discussed above) between the

sound of the soft consonants simply followed by light vowels, and the cases when there is a soft sign between the two.

Keeping all this in mind, an English student will soon find out that the 'barbaric brute of a language' is not unsurmountable after all! And I am glad to repeat that English, or rather British, people take the lead amongst all Europeans in the capacity of learning it.

A few introductory lines to our *o*, because this is the letter that gets affected by the stress falling on it.

When there is *no* stress on it, the *o* is mostly pronounced as an *a*: *Хорошо́* (all right, very well) sounds *harasho*; *водá* (water)—*vada*; *огóнь* (fire)—*agon'*, etc. But we *think* of it as an *o* all the same, which corresponds in English to the *thinking* of the presence of a *g* at the end of present participles: without the speaker's thinking about the *g* being there, the 'coming' would turn into 'comin',' 'writing' into 'writin',' etc. Therefore, in transliterating Russian words, I prefer to keep the *o* wherever it is spelt in Russian.

When the stress does fall on it, the *o* sounds particularly distinct and pointed (there is never any admixture of the sounds *h* or *w* to a Russian *o*); when the stress falls elsewhere (maybe on another *o* in the same word), then the unaccentuated *o* is pronounced quickly and lightly, leaving the whole weight of the word, as usual, with the accentuated syllable. Thus, the above-mentioned *хорошо́* carries the whole weight with the last *o*: the first two *o*'s can be run over entirely, if you are talking quickly! whilst in words like *опа́сно* (dangerously) or *ужа́сно* (dreadfully), the last *o* is chequed at its very start. This rule is quite easy to follow.

Now for the alphabet:

*Dark vowels : а, э, ы, о, у.*

Russian Characters.	Represented by—	Sounding—
А а	<i>a</i>	As in Italian. Сани (sledges) <i>sani</i> .
Э э	<i>e</i>	As in Italian; or as in English in <i>end</i> . Это (this) <i>eto</i> ; поэма (poem) <i>poema</i> .
— ы	<i>y</i>	As <i>i</i> in <i>bit</i> , but much deeper and darker. There are no words beginning with it. Мы (we) <i>my</i> ; вы (you) <i>vy</i> ; сынъ (son) <i>syn</i> .
О о	<i>o</i>	As in Italian or as in English in <i>on</i> . Осы (wasps), <i>osy</i> ; оба (both), <i>oba</i> .
У у	<i>u</i>	As in Italian. Уши (ears) <i>ushi</i> ; путь (way) <i>put'</i> .

*Corresponding light vowels :*

я, е or ѣ, и or і, ё or е, ю.

Я я	<i>ya</i>	As in English in <i>yard</i> , when the <i>y</i> -sound is present in the Russian word. Я (I) <i>ya</i> ; ядро (shell) <i>yadro</i> ; моя (mine, <i>femin.</i> ), <i>moya</i> ; семья (family) <i>sem'ya</i> .
	Or <i>a</i>	When the <i>y</i> -sound is absent. Сѣмя (seed) <i>sem'a</i> ; время (time) <i>vr'em'a</i> ; Воля (will) <i>vol'a</i> .
Е е or Ѣ ѣ	<i>ye</i>	As in English in <i>yes</i> , when the <i>y</i> -sound is present. Ель (pine tree) <i>yel'</i> ; есть (is) <i>yest'</i> ; ѣсть (to eat) <i>yest'</i> ; что такое? (what?) <i>chto takoye?</i> объединѣніе (the uniting) <i>ob'yedin'eniye</i> ; варѣнье (jam) <i>var'e-nye</i> ; съѣлъ (ate it up) <i>syel</i> ; хорѣшее (nice— <i>sing. neut.</i> ) <i>horosheye</i> .
	Or <i>ie</i>	When the English <i>y</i> has already just been used to represent the preceding ы. Храбрые (brave—in <i>plur.</i> ) <i>hrabryie</i> ; милые (dear—in <i>plur.</i> ) <i>milyie</i> .

Russian Characters.	Represented by—	Sounding—
	Or e	As in Italian, when the <i>y</i> -sound is absent. Тепло́ (it is warm) <i>t'eplo</i> ; тепе́рь (now) <i>t'ep'er'</i> ; тѣ́ло (body, flesh) <i>t'elo</i> ; дѣ́ло (business, deed) <i>d'elo</i> ; нѣ́мецъ (a German) <i>n'em'etz</i> ; вѣ́село (gaily) <i>v'es'elo</i> .
И и and I i	i	As in Italian. Иа́ба (hut) <i>izba</i> . The <i>i</i> stands in Russian only before the vowels, but sounds exactly like и. Мо́лнія (lightning) <i>molniya</i> ; Англі́я (England) <i>Angliya</i> .
Е ѐ and e	yo	As in English in <i>yoke</i> , when the <i>y</i> -sound is present. Елка́ (Christmas tree) <i>volka</i> ; моё́ (mine—in <i>sing. neut.</i> ), <i>mojo</i> .
	Or o	When the <i>y</i> -sound is absent. Ве́сѣлый (gay—in <i>sing. masc.</i> ), <i>ves'oly</i> ; Але́ша (shortened: Alexè), <i>Al'osha</i> . This sound has the stress falling on it <i>always</i> ; therefore the <i>o</i> in it sounds clear and brisk.
Ю ю	yu	As the English word <i>you</i> , when the <i>y</i> -sound is present. Юла́ (spin-top) <i>yula</i> ; Юлі́я (Julia) <i>Yuliya</i> ; пою́ (I sing) <i>poju</i> ; мою́ (mine—in <i>fem. accus.</i> ) <i>moju</i> ; мою́ (I wash) <i>moju</i> .
	Or u	When the <i>y</i> -sound is absent. Лю́ди (people) <i>ludi</i> ; любóвь (love) <i>l'ubov'</i> ; люблю́ (I love) <i>l'ubl'u</i> .
— й	y	As in English in <i>boy</i> , represents an independent vowel. There are no words beginning with it. Бой́ (battle) <i>boy</i> ; Домо́й! (home!) <i>domoy!</i> <i>Diphthongs</i> ий and ый are usual terminations with the adjectives (in <i>masc. sing. nomin.</i> ). Being too complex for detailed transliteration they should be represented by <i>i</i> and <i>y</i> respectively. Чайко́вскій, <i>Chaykovski</i> ; талáнтливый (talented) <i>talantlivy</i> ; любими́й (beloved) <i>l'ubimy</i> .



## Consonants—hard and soft (palatalized):

б, в, г, д, ж, з, к, л, м, н, п, р, с, т, ф, х, ц, ч, ш, щ.

Russian Characters.	Represented by—	Sounding—
Б б	<i>b</i>	As in English. Лобъ (forehead) <i>lob</i> ; рабъ (serf) <i>rab</i> ; бытъ (manner of life) <i>byt</i> .
	<i>b'</i>	Soft: Рябь (ripple) <i>r'ab'</i> ; бѣлый (white) <i>b'ely</i> ; бью (I am beating) <i>byú</i> .
В в	<i>v</i>	As in English. Зовъ (call) <i>zov</i> .
	<i>v'</i>	Soft: Бровь (eyebrow) <i>brov'</i> ; вѣтка (branch) <i>v'etka</i> ; соловьи (nightingales) <i>solovyí</i> .
Г г	<i>g</i> <sup>1</sup>	As in English in <i>good</i> . Годъ (year) <i>god</i> .
Д д	<i>d</i>	As in English. Домъ (the home, house) <i>dom</i> ; радъ (glad—in <i>masc.</i> ) <i>rad</i> .
	<i>d'</i>	Soft: Лошадь (horse) <i>loshad'</i> ; дождь (rain) <i>dojd'</i> ; дѣло (business, deed) <i>d'elo</i> .
Ж ж		As in French (the Russian ear divides the English <i>j</i> into <i>d</i> and <i>j</i> ). Женá (wife) <i>jena</i> ; Рождество (Christmas) <i>Rojdestvo</i> .
З з	<i>z</i>	As in English in <i>zeal</i> . Возъ (cart) <i>voz</i> ; здра́вствуйте! (a greeting at any time of day or night) <i>zdrastvuyt'e</i> !
	<i>z'</i>	Soft: Врозь (apart) <i>vroz'</i> ; зѣлень (the green) <i>z'el'en'</i> ; зять (son-in-law) <i>z'at'</i> ; зія́ть (to gape) <i>ziyat'</i> ; з'емля́ (land, earth) <i>z'eml'a</i> . <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> I am not dealing with the variety of this sound, because it is simply a bad southern pronunciation. The only word in which a kind of a soft *r* is universally adopted is Господи (O Lord!), and then it sounds between a *g* and an *h*—voiced—as it does in a few adjectives when followed by *к*; therefore the usual way of transliterating it by a *kh* is quite wrong, coarse, and ugly.

<sup>2</sup> Unrecognizable in the 'Nova Zembla.'

Russian Characters.	Repre- sented by—	Sounding—
К к	<i>k</i>	As in English. Ключъ (key) <i>kľuch</i> .
Л л	<i>l</i>	Much deeper than the Western <i>l</i> . Ложка (spoon) <i>lojka</i> ; далъ (gave— in <i>masc.</i> ) <i>dal</i> ; золь (angry) <i>zol</i> ; сѢЛНЬШКО (the dear sun) <i>solnyshko</i> .
	<i>l'</i>	Soft, like in <i>elusive</i> , but still more melted: Далъ (a far distance) <i>dal'</i> ; соль (salt) <i>sol'</i> ; лёдъ (ice) <i>lod</i> ; людный (alive—through the presence of many people) <i>ľudny</i> ; налью (I shall pour out) <i>nalyu</i> .
М м	<i>m</i> <i>m'</i>	As in English. МЫЛО (soap) <i>mylo</i> . Soft: МЫЛЫЙ (dear) <i>m'ily</i> ; смѢТЬ (to dare) <i>sm'el'</i> ; время (time) <i>vr'em'a</i> ; семья (family) <i>s'emya</i> .
Н н	<i>n</i> <i>n'</i>	As in English. Онъ (he) <i>on</i> . Like the Italian <i>gn</i> , but sounding quite short at the end of the words. Soft: Конь (steed) <i>kon'</i> ; нѢМОЙ (dumb) <i>n'emoy</i> ; СѢНЯ (short- ened name for Sofya), <i>Son'a</i> ; до свиданья (au revoir) <i>do svidaniya</i> .
П п	<i>p</i> <i>p'</i>	As in English. ОкѢПЪ (trench) <i>okop</i> ; пухъ (down) <i>puh</i> . Soft: Топь (swamp) <i>top'</i> ; тепѢрь (now) <i>ťep'er'</i> ; храпѢ (in snoring), <i>hrap'a</i> ; хлопья (fluffs), <i>hlorya</i> .
Р р	<i>r</i> <i>r'</i>	As in Scotch, rolling it; short. Сыръ (cheese) <i>syř</i> ; рабѢта (work) <i>rabota</i> . Soft: also with a momentary rolling. Корь (measles) <i>kor'</i> ; морѢ (sea) <i>mor'e</i> ; вѢморье (strand) <i>vzmorye</i> .
С с	<i>s</i> <i>s'</i>	As in English in <i>sun</i> . Сынъ (son) <i>syn</i> ; спѢсибо (thank you) <i>spasibo</i> . Soft: СѢла (strength) <i>sila</i> ; сѢлъ (he sat down) <i>s'el</i> ; сѢлъ (he ate up) <i>syel</i> . <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Just in a few cases the hard sign ѣ is inserted in the middle of the word; then it acts on the following vowel as the soft sign does, *i.e.*, adding to it the *y*-sound (without palatalizing the preceding consonant—but this is too subtle a difference for a non-Russian ear!).

Russian Characters.	Represented by—	Sounding—
Т т	t t'	As the English double <i>tt</i> . То́тъ (that one) <i>tot</i> ; по́топъ (deluge) <i>potop</i> . Soft: Хо́тъ (although) <i>hot'</i> ; тѣхо (gently) <i>t'ihó</i> ; нѣте! (take this!) <i>nat'e!</i> плѣтье (dress) <i>platye</i> .
Ф ф Х х	f h	As in English. Фу́нтъ (pound) <i>funt</i> . As in English in <i>home</i> . Че́хов (name of the author); хѣта (hut) <i>hata</i> .
Ц ц	ts or tz	As in English. Ца́рь (Tsar) <i>Tsar'</i> ; Ца́рство (Tsardom) <i>Tsarstvo</i> ; Нѣмцы (the Germans) <i>N'emtzy</i> ; цѣль (aim) <i>tzel'</i> ; прицѣль (range, in shooting) <i>pritzel</i> .
Ч ч	ch	As in English in <i>church</i> . Чело́вѣкъ (man, human being) <i>chelov'ek</i> .
Ш ш	sh	As in English in <i>shock</i> . Ша́пка (hat, cap) <i>shapka</i> ; шля́па (lady's hat) <i>shl'apa</i> ; каша (all sorts of porridge) <i>kasha</i> .
Щ щ	shch	As in English in <i>Ashchurch</i> . Щи́ (name of a national soup) <i>shchi</i> ; ро́ща (a small wood) <i>roshcha</i> ; борщъ (a name of another national soup) <i>borshch</i> .
— ь	'	Soft sign: its influence being represented by a comma at the top corner of the palatalized consonant. Мы́сль (thought) <i>mysl'</i> .
— ь	Or y	When it stands between a consonant and a vowel, thus producing the effect of a <i>y</i> -sound between them. Кры́лья (wings) <i>krylya</i> .
— ь		Hard sign, omitted in transliterating, except where it stands in the middle of a word, inserting a <i>y</i> -sound; смы́сль (sense) <i>smysl</i> ; поды́ездъ (front porch) <i>podyezd</i> ; въѣ́хать (to drive into) <i>vychat'</i> .

Amongst the Russian words chosen here as examples, there are some of the most difficult ones with regard to pronunciation; keeping other considerations as main reasons in selecting the examples, I nevertheless included some difficult words quite consciously. Firstly, in order that my reader couldn't suspect me in veiling over still harder obstacles from his view—with the purpose of luring him on to a treacherous road! And secondly, because the whole of this Introduction is intended only for those who have already started learning Russian: to them it may, perhaps, serve as a little compass. I must add, though, that *I don't for a moment consider this particular scheme of transliteration as finally solving the problem.* I shall always consider it insolvable, because oral instruction is the only means which can give an idea of the difference between the two spheres of sounds, English and Russian. In the case of those foreigners whose Russian is 'self-taught'—it is almost unrecognizable! Common denominators are too scanty! Instead of wondering at the Russian words in their Romance disguise—much better come and investigate them in their genuine aspect and meaning.

But the reader who is interested exclusively in the Russians themselves, as reflected in the spirit of their language, should begin with the book itself—*leaving the 'terrible stuff' of my Introduction alone!* Because, above all, it is not the Russian sounds themselves that I would mainly like to convey to the English public through this little work, but the *channels along which the Russian mind works*—whether I am talking about the subconsciously created single words, or about whole works by Russian authors.

I am glad to avail myself of the opportunity and to welcome the two books by Mr. Nevill Forbes: *Russian Grammar* and *First Russian Book*. They show a wonderful

command of our language! Obviously, the author feels perfectly at home in the midst of its subtlety and complexity; this is a delight to a Russian reader who is bored and tormented by all the other textbooks written in English about our Mother-tongue.

And just because I do think of Mr. Forbes's works so highly (especially of the *First Russian Book*), I cannot omit one point about them which does not satisfy a Russian. It is this point that really has made me write all the preceding pages about our sounds *as these are created and pronounced by Russian people* who cherish their national treasure; because it surprises me that Mr. Nevill Forbes, knowing the structure and spirit of our language so brilliantly, should still repeat some items invented by foreigners—items which really hurt a Russian eye and ear. His main mistake is that *absence of difference* in the transliteration of those Russian vowels that *have* the *y*-sound running into them, and those that *have not* got it. I shall not repeat the whole business over again. Those who care, can look it up above (pp. 18, 19). The second mistake consists in the advice to use the English sound *w* in order to pronounce our hard л. I also mentioned this before: there is *no w*-sound in the genuine Russian language; it happens only as a Polonism. And the third mistake is—using the English letters *f, t, a, k, s, p* and *i* for transliterating the Russian в, д, о, г, з, б and ѣ (= *v, d, o, g, z, b* and *e*). In doing so, Mr. Forbes allows no difference between the sounds of these different letters in праць and фарлаць, годъ and котъ, ледъ and полетъ, мала and мало, лугъ and лукъ, богъ and бокъ, разъ and расъ, лобъ and клопъ, вльдь and вить, etc.

I can but repeat that it is all right for a Russian to put a shade of ф, т, а, к, с, п and е into his в, д, о, г, з, б and и, because we instinctively keep in our mental

vision the correct spelling and the genuine sound of the words containing the characters of the *last* row; but for a foreigner who has not got this original sight and sound in his brain since early childhood, for him it is more than dangerous to learn those words as if they really had the characters of the *first* row in them!

I think I can make this quite clear if I say that it would be exactly the same thing if *we* were taught to pronounce in English: *pensif* and *offensif*, instead of *pensive* and *offensive*; or *apstract* instead of *abstract*; or *tolt* instead of *told*. One can find a shade of *f*, *p*, and *t* in these examples as much as in the above-given Russian ones, but—thinking of them in the right way makes all the difference to the sound. And I really cannot help insisting that it would be better for the English students of our language if they were taught to think of all the sounds in the right way. Again it comes to the same: in teaching in an *oral* way it is quite right and even excellent to point out the subtle shades of pronunciation in certain cases; but to fix those cases as general rules *in print* is quite different, I think.

Otherwise, the works by Mr. Nevill Forbes are not only formidable, excellent—and the only works written in English that are bound to help the students of our language to a very great extent—but they also are works in which the author's pleasure in dealing with his subject is obvious; and this is dear to a Russian reader, because one can't enjoy writing a philological textbook unless one is carried away by the inner spirit of the language! Only then the complexity of a foreign grammar can be explained with such care as Mr. Forbes explains it.

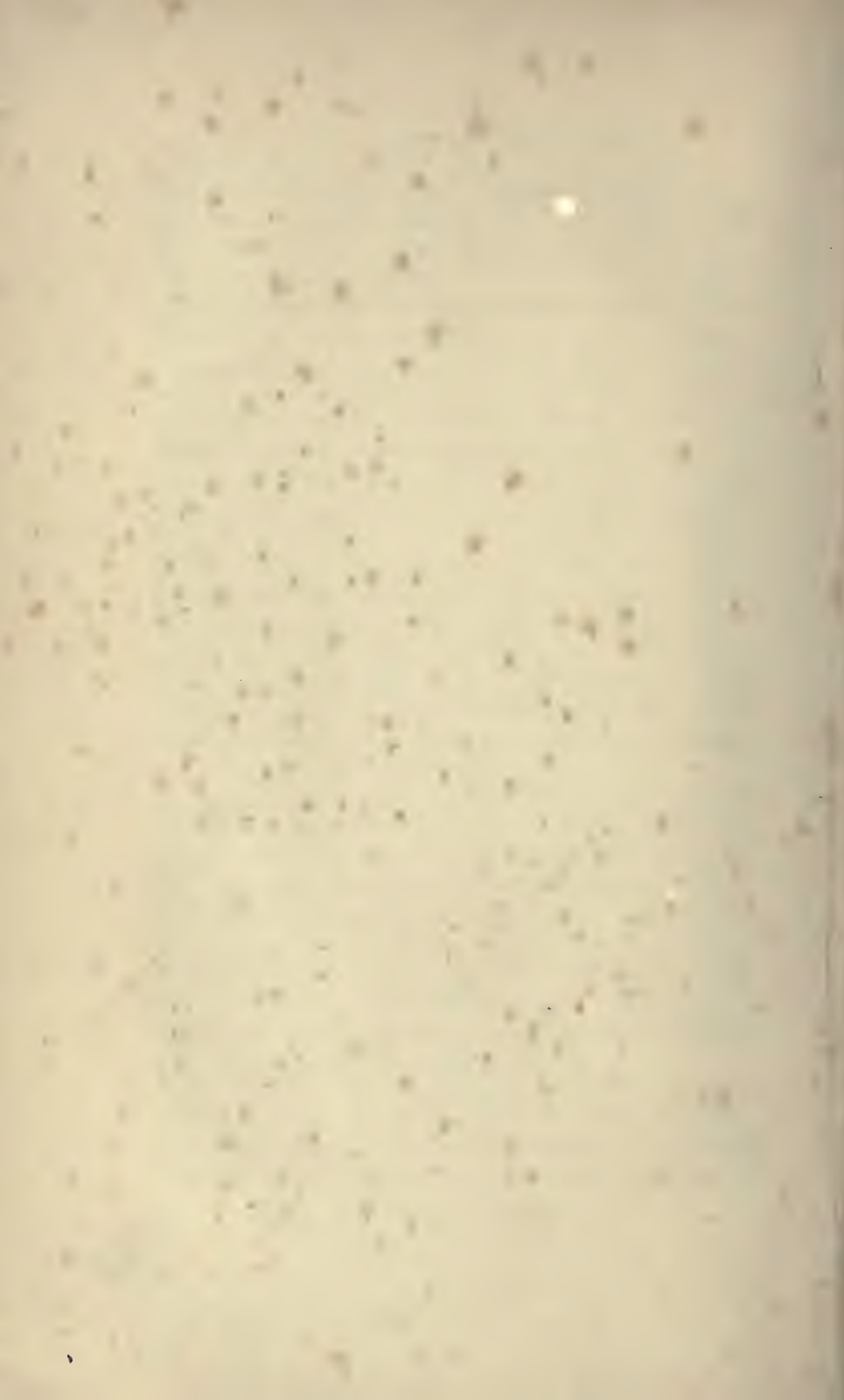
All that complexity—seeming as well as real—is worth an effort; this is the opinion of all those English people who have made it. Because the structure of the Russian language is still more interesting and beautiful than it is

## INTRODUCTION

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difficult. The difficulties I do not deny. But I can honestly say that, of all foreigners, British people alone are capable of overcoming them. Of this I have had ample experience in Russia, and I am glad to put it on record for the encouragement of my friends in this country.

N. JARINTZOV





## THE RUSSIANS AND THEIR LANGUAGE

AT the beginning of the War I came across the following expression somewhere in the English Press: 'However much has been recently written about the Russians, they will remain to us "Russians"—just "Russians," that is all.' I find this rather nice. Much better to be acknowledged as unknown strangers than to be misunderstood. The Russians have never taken the trouble to advertise themselves when they might command deserved respect. For the last two centuries they have always expected the light to come to them from the West, and in the meanwhile have developed in their own way, with unexpected strides and in unexpected directions—*wherever there was room* to go ahead.

It needs absence from Russia for several years in order to summon up sufficient courage to blow her trumpets for her a little! (The Russians are always dissatisfied with themselves.) But she really deserves it on some points, and just now,

when one constantly hears that 'Russia is in the mind of all Europe,' I would like to share with those who care for it some thoughts derived from interesting studies and observations. These thoughts concern the spirit of our land, which is interwoven with its language to the highest imaginable extent.

As long as national individuality remains an unconquerable feature (however much modified by the wisest cosmopolitanism), we Russians cannot help loving our language passionately. Russia represents a complicated interlacement of contrasts. We feel in it like fish in water. But the mere reflection of that scale of contrasts in the very sounds of our language puzzles every non-Slavonic student; and I have tried, in my preface, to be of some help by throwing light on the Russian pronunciation and its transliteration—*as it appears from a Russian's point of view*. I must repeat that there are no two persons who would entirely agree on these points if one of them is English and the other Russian. Therefore, I am brightly expecting any attack on the part of English philologists! My personal conscientious effort was only intended to show that the original Russian spelling contains no mystery; on the contrary, it reflects the chief feature of the Slavonic nationalities: a close combination of extreme contrasts retaining most clearly the individuality of each item. Not a softly flowing matter

of amalgamated ingredients, but a sparkling, vivacious current of most contrasting substances. Not a chemical compound, but a kaleidoscopic crystallization.

I have left all the technical discussions on the Russian sounds and on the problem of their transliteration to the preface, where they can be looked up by the present, or intending, students of the Russian language. The book itself is meant for a broader purpose—namely, to show *the national character of the Russians as reflected in their language*. This is my main ambition! The secondary one is to show the wealth, the sparkling colouring, the *warmth*, and the flexibility of our Russian speech, which are due chiefly to three factors: (1) The youthful vigour caused by the ever-present ingress of the child-young Old Slavonic and Old Russian elements; (2) the all-powerful influence of the ‘syllables of nuances’ and terminations, the scales of which allow boundless subtlety in the rendering of various shades and half-shades of thought; (3) the freedom of arranging the relative order of words in every phrase.

In adding these few paragraphs after the book itself has been finished, I also ought to say that I wrote it ‘just as it came’—without keeping to any theory or system—myself frequently enjoying the unexpected revelations, as the details and varieties of examples came swarming to my mind.

Therefore, kind reader, don't be surprised at the following pages. You know the case when you contemplate a journey and find that you have to pack so many things, that you think George, one of Mr. Jerome's *Three Men in a Boat*, was right when he suggested making out a list of articles they would *not* want on the river—as being the shortest. Well, mine is just the case. The luxuries of speech which we do possess and you don't are so numerous that they overwhelmed me for a moment when I was starting on my interesting task; and the alternative I involuntarily grasped at, to begin with, presented itself in those few points where the English language seems to beat ours.

\* \* \* \* \*

English  
concep-  
tions not  
existing in  
Russian.

There are some English words which we either do not possess at all, or apply in somewhat different circumstances. Such is, for instance, 'kick.' Our equivalent for it (*brykàtsa*) is applied exclusively to the manners of cattle! Football was not known in Russia till the end of last century; and since they have adopted it over there, they also had to adopt the word 'kick' with it—because no one would think of applying the Russian definition for cattle's kicking to human beings. But when we adopt a foreign word we treat it as our own—*i.e.*, like a piece of wax; therefore, the sound 'kick' is treated with us as the football itself is—and as all foreign words are. No English-

man would recognize either his 'safe' in the bank, nor his 'flirt'—in their numerous Russian aspects commanded by the winding paths of the grammar.

The same is the doom of the English word 'shock.' But here I must add that the idea of calling things 'shocking' is so far from the Russian mind that there exists no original equivalent to it at all; and when we use the English expression, 'shocking!' we do so exclusively in a humorous tone, and thus apply it—very emphatically indeed—in its original form. But using it as a verb (although also for fun only), we treat it as we do our own verbs. I feel tempted to give in a footnote a sample scale of the terminations—which are similar with hundreds of genuine Russian verbs of a certain group.<sup>1</sup> No school child or peasant thinks them to be anything special, or, in fact, thinks of their being there at all; it is only the gerund which the working classes are apt to twist

<sup>1</sup> INFINITIVE : *Shokirovat.* (We need no *c* before the *k*.)

IMPERATIVE : *Shokiruy* (*s.*) *shokiruyte* (*pl.*).

PRESENT TENSE : *Shokiruyu*, *shokiruyesh*, *shokiruyet*, *shokiruyem*, *shokiruyete*, *shokiruyut*.

PAST TENSE : *Shokiroval* (*m.*), *shokirovala* (*fem.*), *shokirovalo* (*neut.*), *shokirovali* (*pl.*).

FUTURE : The complex future tense, as with the infinitive.

The simple future, which consists of one word only, does not exist with this verb, because it has not the perfective aspect granted to it. If it had, the following variety of terminations might have been greater.

GERUND PRESENT : *shokiruya*. GERUND PAST : *shokirovav*.

a little bit in their own way—but without being in the least puzzled over it. . . . ‘He is vyshòdsy’ is likely to be the answer of the general servant of your friend’s when you fail to find him in; it stands for: ‘He is *vyshedshi*’—‘He is being out.’ But if you pensively remark: ‘You must not say “vyshòdsy,” Akulina, but *vyshedshi*,’ she will answer, utterly undisturbed: ‘That is just what I say—vyshòdsy.’

But one mistake like this is not much amongst the number thirty-two, is it? I think this should be rather encouraging, and not alarming.

But what may seem, perhaps, really alarming is the fact that we have no word for ‘respect-

ADJECTIVE PARTICIPLE, IN THREE GENDERS AND SIX CASES.

	<i>Masculine.</i>	<i>Feminine.</i>	<i>Neuter.</i>
<i>Nominative :</i>	shokiruyushchi	—shchaya	shcheye
<i>Genitive :</i>	shokiruyushchago	—shchey	—
<i>Dative :</i>	shokiruyushchemu	—	—
<i>Accusative :</i>	—	shchuyu	—
<i>Instrumental :</i>	shokiruyushchim	—	—
<i>Prepositional :</i>	shokiruyushchem	—	—

ADJECTIVE PARTICIPLE, PAST TENSE.

	<i>Masculine.</i>	<i>Feminine.</i>	<i>Neuter.</i>
<i>Nominative :</i>	shokirovavshi,	—shaya	—sheye
<i>Genitive :</i>	shokirovavshago	—shey	—
<i>Dative :</i>	shokirovavshemu	—	—
<i>Accusative :</i>	—	shuyu	—
<i>Instrumental :</i>	shokirovavshim	—	—
<i>Prepositional :</i>	shokirovavshem	—	—

Isn’t it fun! The poor original English ‘shock’ looks quite lost and deprived of all its withering power amongst the variety of the all-important and indispensable terminations. There

ability'—and, what is worse, that we use this English term (just with a Russian ending: respectabel'nost') with a distinct touch of humour too. We don't need this characteristic, somehow! The qualities which go with us to build up people's reputation are rather different. I shall mention them later.

Nor are there any definitions in Russian to correspond with the 'bank holiday' and 'week-end.' Bank holidays are so numerous in our country (about a score of them or more<sup>1</sup>) that we cannot help a feeling of surprise when we first see the national importance attached to them in England. There is no universal rushing from one place to another on the Russian 'bank' holidays.

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are not two amongst them that would be similar, as I left out all those that are duplicates. If you count them you will find thirty-two different endings to the English four: shock, shocks, shocked, and shocking. We couldn't possibly do with them alone, although we have only three tenses.

But it is not at all as dreadful as it looks: for one thing, please note that we have *one* letter for each of the English combinations that occur amongst these endings—*sh, shch, yu, ye, ya*. Therefore, our words are much shorter than their English 'backward-transliterations.' Besides, I am giving my reader a glimpse into that seemingly hopeless labyrinth of the Russian grammar straight away, with the conscious purpose of leading him out of it on to a much wider road hereafter; then the beauties of our language, which illustrate its inner spirit, will, I hope, reconcile him with this undoubtedly difficult technical detail. There is nothing more dreadful than this to come!

<sup>1</sup> Saints' days and Royal Family birthdays and names' days. They are holidays for the banks as well as for everyone else.

It must be for that same reason that the expression 'week-end' is absent as well: it would probably not have come into being with the English people either if they didn't make so much of it. The inner cause rests, of course, with the organization of English life; with us, people idle in the weekdays as frequently as they work like niggers<sup>1</sup> on Saturdays and Sundays of their own accord. The spirit of self-organization innate with the Russian masses lies not with the dividing of everyday life into little squares generally, but *only* with organizing certain public functions from the point of view of national need.

We also have no 'job' or 'business' in Russian: 'deed' and 'work' (*d'èlo, rabòta*) cover these two conceptions without which the English language is unimaginable. Therefore, the expression 'a good job' translated into Russian by one who does not know English life closely would run 'a kind deed'—which is not often the same thing!

Neither have we 'enjoy,' as understood in English. We enjoy Nature, love, work (not always!), art, rest, fresh air, space, freedom—but we don't bring the idea of enjoyment down to cold mutton or a cup of tea. In the same way we use the word 'happy' very sparingly: it signifies too much with us to be used in reference to a comfortable chair, or a motor ride, or a couple of sandwiches, or the

<sup>1</sup> We say 'like oxen.'



fire-side. But when we happen to see a really good play in England we feel astonished and hurt by the lukewarm reception of an English house. In Russia we almost decline to go home to bed after having listened to a fine opera. We'll sit in some square (when the lights are extinguished in the theatre) and go on humming the captivating tunes till the early hours. Or we shall wake our cook (who is not easily surprised), have a hot samovàr, and go on enthusiastically at our piano. Very funny and very unhealthy? Quite so! But—who enjoys, who really enjoys life most? . . . This remains an open question when it comes to Nature and Art. A Russian is more at one with Nature around him; he does not constantly find faults with her being now too cold, now too close, now too windy.

An open question.

We find that in England Nature is quite overshadowed by weather. Living even in the most beautiful of English counties, in the country, we realize that it is hardly polite to begin a conversation with anything besides weather. (It is like the Belgians' 'Bonjour, madame! Bonjour, monsieur!' without which they won't let you off, even if you come to tell them a bit of splendid news about the war!)

In fact, a degradation from the proper subject—which is prescribed once for ever as a kind of greeting and an opening paragraph to every imaginable

conversation—is regarded in this country as incredible. I had to come to that conclusion finally after my own naïve departure the other day.

A side-  
light.

It was raining to that extent when even a Russian would be likely to pass a remark that ‘the swamps of heaven have given way’—*Razvèrzhis’ hl’ab’i n’eb’èsnyia!* It seemed quite superfluous to tell everyone you met in the flooded roads that it was ‘very wet.’ As I tried to distinguish through the waterfall coming from my umbrella who was the lady approaching me from the opposite direction, I made a mistake, and took her for quite a different and somewhat unpleasant person. Therefore, when she turned out to be her real self, I rather rejoiced at the revelation and, passing by her, called out cheerfully:

‘Hullo, Mrs. So-and-So! I had not recognized you. Are you all right?’

But, before I finished my ejaculation, she exclaimed in her turn:

‘Isn’t it? Very wet indeed.’

She would not wait to hear what I was saying, obviously crediting me with sufficient sense not to talk about anything except the deluge through which we were marching. Her answer was ready for everyone whom she might meet along the three miles’ stretch of the road, and no frivolous flight was expected from anyone’s imagination.

I simply cannot understand how an English postman can repeat pleasantly the same remark

about the weather literally at every door as he delivers the letters! Ours always does (I once followed him all along his tour round the village). A Russian postman would have to do so if his authorities had issued a circular for that end; but he would vehemently complain, in privacy, that, 'Now it has come to dragging the soul out of a man bit by bit.'

I don't think a single Russian could do it—leaving alone the fact that it would never occur to him as an interesting thing to do. We frequently burst out with something that forms an interest in common between us, omitting even the word of greeting<sup>1</sup>); but we don't say anything at all if there is nothing to say.

We had once a Polish count staying with us here one hot summer. After his first visit to the shops of the little country town the poor elegant old gentleman returned quite upset and indignant.

'What on earth makes them all tell me that it is very warm, when they see me almost melting away? . . . And they insist on my answer, too! . . . I call it perfectly inconsidered—brutal. Queer form of civilization! . . .'

It really does seem that there is too much 'weather' in England. Certainly, there is a section of public who almost live out of doors—but

<sup>1</sup> Zdràstvuyt'e!—the same for all hours of day or night, deriving from the ancient: 'Keep well!'

what a minority they are! Those English people who have visited Russia reproach us for having warm houses and no open windows in the winter (they seldom notice the small opening pane in the double winter-windows)—but that is what *we* call comfort: no woollen underwear (which we can't stand), and yet no shivering; both of which are inevitable in this country. And is there one Englishman who would actually passionately love snow and frost—not for the sake of sport, but for the sake of their own beauty? For the sake of wide, wide distances snow-covered from horizon to horizon? . . . To us they are full of silently-suggestive beauty—something of the kind you get in a sleep when you are surrounded with distinctly-felt fascination without being able to tell, when you wake up, of what it really consisted. . . .

And we never see English people lying on the grass for hours, and missing their meals for the pure pleasure of it. As to midnight walks, and boating, and bathing, they seem to be out of the question in this lovely green little island! Half of its beauty is simply wasted. The only explanation may be that we do not give up our afternoons to enjoy Nature in a decent, organized way by means of out-door games, and thus crave for her in the evenings and nights. But in England, the moment the lamps are lit the curtains must be drawn, and, if you are a Russian—maybe choking in the at-

mosphere of a drawing-room after late dinner—you must not suggest to the party such a thing as going out into the garden at *this* hour! And if you try to slip out on the sly, you will find all the doors locked and bolted. It is simply hopeless—unless you have enough sense of humour to enjoy it inwardly.

Why, there are but a few amongst the beautiful English gardens where there are any seats!

But—so much for the weather.

Perhaps I have succeeded in trying to explain that we *are* endowed with the capacity of enjoying what, in our conception, is worth ‘enjoying’; but, nevertheless, we do not apply this word itself so lavishly and so casually as it is applied in this country. One might think that we are spoiled by an overflow of happiness to the extent of not appreciating the blessings of the established everyday comforts; but it is not that. The fact is, we think too highly of happiness and—as one rarely gets the happiness as understood by a Russian—the two words ‘enjoyment’ and ‘happiness’ (*naslajd’èniye*, *schàstye*) are left in their glorious heights.

For the same reason we don’t use the verb ‘to love’ in the everyday English manner: ‘I would love to,’ or, ‘this is lovely.’ The first of these expressions does not exist at all, and the second is used (as an adverb) exclusively with reference to actions resulting from serious profound affection;

whilst 'lovely hair,' 'lovely dinner,' 'lovely piece of bacon' would sound in Russian absurd and comical, and such expressions are never used.

A clash in  
a defini-  
tion.

Nor do we use the word 'lovers' indiscreetly—although, strangely enough, for quite a different reason. In Russia 'lovers' means, exclusively, man and woman who live in intimacy out of wedlock without necessarily being tied by bonds of true affection or mutual moral obligations. There are many cases in every country where people live like that, and in Russia they are numerous too; but with us they are considered as quite different and distinct from the unions of beautiful, serious free love—when man and woman, though unwedded, live openly and honestly together, cherishing their home and bringing up their children: in such cases they are called husband and wife, because, in our conviction they *are* husband and wife; even the servants and the police (!) call the woman *bàryn'a*, which means a married lady, and *not* *bàryshn'a*, which means miss. This is done with the mere feeling of decency and consideration, leaving alone the higher convictions, simply because 'lovers' is a very coarse word, implying mainly casual, physical—and in any case not openly admitted relations. And again, even when they are casual and not open, but are guessed—one does not apply the proper definition, except in privacy, for the simple reason that it is not the way with the Russians to interfere with,

or to discuss, other people's private affairs, unless they themselves make them public.

Then, on the other hand, Russian boys and girls even of the lower classes are not given to 'outings' with their arms round each other's waists. This parading and passionless kissing in the streets and gateways are not in the Russian taste. There is much frankness about the Russians, which means conscious acknowledgment of one's convictions—but no naïveness. Whatever the reader will find in this book with regard to the psychology of the Russians, he must not imagine that they are naïve! Their 'warmth of heart' as we say, is much deeper than naïveness; we draw a line—a very distinct one, too—between the latter and the openness of mind and feeling. It is due to this national feature that our boys and girls who are in love with each other would hate to have any definition stuck on to them like a badge. As to the one of 'lovers'—well, I hope I have explained sufficiently clearly that this word defines exclusively that kind of intimacy which does not stand airing very well, because it is on a different scale from the open free unions. Therefore it should be clear that our young people would not dream of calling themselves 'lovers' when engaged, either. We have genuine Russian words for *fiancé* and *fiancée* (p. 86) by which we call them—when they wish it. (But it also ought to be remembered, by the way, that we have nothing like the English showers of wedding

presents in our country: somehow we don't think about the future household of those engaged. It is not their friends' business in Russia.)

Finally, I am quite ready to admit that, with us, the definition 'lover' (*l'ubòvnik*) is somewhat an offence against its original meaning. But so it may be here: with us it is too specific—with you too casual. We never know what to think exactly when people in England are called lovers (with us the definition is, at least, far from being vague!), and when this is done in an English company it makes us feel a little bit awkward—at the expense of the speaker's lack of delicacy!

\* \* \* \* \*

The attitude of the Russian mind in general,—

It is seldom that you meet, amongst the educated Russians, people who are interested in the details of everyday life. One goes into them as one joins the unavoidable current of the crowd in the street, but there is always, above and ahead of it, some eventual aim, something much more important which one follows consciously or instinctively, which makes the surroundings of practical life almost meaningless in comparison. This causes the absence in Russia of spick-and-span households; it also causes, to a greater or smaller extent, disorderliness in the arrangements of one's time; and, what is worse, disorderliness in the home education of children. But one of the worst criticisms that can be passed by a Russian on another is the remark



that he or she is 'trifling' (*melochnòy*), which means attaching too much importance to a beautiful household, to etiquette, to money, to dress.

On the other hand, devoting one's whole time entirely to some altruistic and absorbing activity (to the verge of foolishness from a practical point of view) is sincerely respected as a contrast to 'triflingness.' By the way, this last word is almost the same as the one for small change, coppers; the additional syllable only conveys the conception that triflingness is 'coppers' morally, as it were: *mèloch*, *mèlochnost*'.

For similar reasons, the word 'fool' is a pro-<sup>—and re-</sup>found insult. One does not apply it to people in <sup>garding</sup>the way of a joke! But, again, another syllable <sup>fools,</sup>added to it turns it at once into a term of compassion for those who really are fools—idiots, backward children, religious maniacs. Thus, *duràk* is very offensive, whilst *durachòk* is sympathetic.

A broad outlook, cleverness, and initiative are <sup>—and</sup>qualities on which a person's value is very largely <sup>clever-</sup>established. <sup>ness,</sup>If some one has a reputation for being clever, one respects him without having seen him, taking it for granted that a clever person is a nice person, too. This last touch in the way of judging people is typically Russian, because with us the most brilliant cleverness without a good heart—a cold, practical, mercantile kind of cleverness weighing up the possible result of action beforehand—

gives a person the reputation of 'a cunning business man,' or 'a carryerist,' which calls forth the silence of disapproval. That is why the Germans have never been liked by the mass of the Russian people. They were spoken of with a shake of one's head, as 'those cunning Germans!' On the whole, the Russians' drawback is of a diametrically opposite nature: they are not sufficiently business-like.

The highest praise one can give in Russia to —and re- man or woman is to call them 'responsive,' sponsive- otzyvchivy<sup>1</sup> and *chùtki*: responsive to everything; ness. this means keeping one's heart and mind open to other people's joys, sadness, dreams, sharing them genuinely; and, above all, responsive to every social call, to every bit of initiative, every vestige of new thought. This is where we used to find England so 'heavy to lift' (*t'ajelà na podyòm*). With us every new idea, plan or invention, every change in the old routine, is welcome and appreciated—everywhere except the Government offices; and even there one notices changes taking place now. . . . 'The New' has always

<sup>1</sup> In this case the *tz* must be pronounced as two separate sounds—a clear *z* following the *t*. This illustrates the drawback of the English alphabet not having a sign for the sound *u*; because a *tz* stands with us for *t* and *z*, and not for *u*. But we have to apply the English *tz* or *ts* in order to convey its sound—because, again, the Latin *c*, which might do, stands in English for a *k*-sound (a thing unthinkable in our alphabet), and thus falls out from the scanty row of mediums.

been accepted with outstretched arms in all branches of science, art, and literature, to say nothing of the individualistic development of social life. Even amongst peasants one never sees the spirit of 'our parents did it this way, so it must be right.' On the contrary—'to see light' is their expression for learning new things. New—always new! Ahead and ahead! That is why the Russians so closely follow the achievements of Western Europe, ever expecting to learn new things from outside, and not noticing that it is often themselves who first step into the unexplored paths. This is very notable with the Russian women. They were the first amongst European women to flock to Universities, to become scientists and social leaders. And it is a Russian woman who is the first aviator for 'war reconnaissance' in the official service of the Russian Government. Now it looks as if all *Intelligentzia* were out equipping and working the network of most efficient private hospitals throughout the country and the 'Flying Detachments of Medical Aid and Nourishment at the front.' Men and women of science, late revolutionaries, aristocratic ladies, peasant-students, clergy, artists, and atheists, all side by side, as near the firing line as possible, whilst several young girls have been given the Order of St. George for their heroism in actual fighting, as they joined the rank and file. Their presence on

the battlefield depends exclusively on the views of their nearest chiefs, and these hardly ever send them back when the secret of their sex is disclosed, and a nursing sister, who has deliberately taken the command of a battalion when she saw all its officers fall in the course of an attack, was rewarded by a St. George Cross. All this we call 'responsiveness': 'otzyvchivost'.

Quality  
causing  
respon-  
siveness,

*Chùtkost'*—deriving from the above-mentioned adjective *chùtki*—is a very Russian word; it means an extremely developed sense of what a scientist would call a flair for discovering the mood and position of others; an extreme tact alive not merely with diplomacy, but with genuine refinement of feeling: not only thinking for, but feeling with. It is reflected in the saying, 'One does not mention ropes in the house of a man who has been hanged.' The difference between *chùtkost'* and the English word *consideration*, by which it is usually translated, should be clear from the fact that *consideration* refers to a mental attitude only, whereas the root of this Russian definition is *chutyò*, implying the instinctive capacity of 'scenting things.'

—illustrated by an instance at an English school.

I have once seen a fine instance of *chùtkost'* at an English school. . . . The staff and the elder children (men and women, boys and girls) staged for a school entertainment, '*H.M.S. Pinafore*.' Everyone belonging to and connected with the

school-world—including the villagers, who worked in the school grounds—was present at the performance. In the scene on the deck when the Captain, Josephine, and Sir Joseph Porter, ‘the ruler of the Queen’s navy’ are dancing, in turns, to the sounds of their exciting strains, the master who played the captain’s part slipped and fell. He was very nimble, although not young, and, in another moment, continued his solo-dance as gaily as before. But, beloved as he was by the audience, there escaped loud laughter from the younger boys and girls, who are used and free at that school to express many things born of frankness and naturalness which are not allowed at many other places. In another few minutes, when dancing solo in his turn, ‘Sir Joseph’ fell too! On the very same spot where the captain had slipped, only much worse! . . . The ‘ruler of the Queen’s navy’ was a much younger master than the ‘captain,’ and, besides, one who was the children’s usual comrade in all sorts of fun, so their laughter burst forth this time with particular vigour—exactly what the little manœuvre of the ‘ruler’ was intended to produce.

Wasn’t that manœuvre prompted by true *chùtkost*’, both of a friend and of a master? He certainly never breathed to anyone about it; but all amongst the children who possessed some *chùtkost*’ in their turn guessed the little

trick, and it taught them something for the future.

It is a great pity that it is impossible to call in English this master by what is such a nice term of appreciation in Russian.

Too much  
of it.

With the Russians this *chùtkost'* is sometimes carried too far. The other day a Russian friend of mine, descending from a taxi in London, looked at the taximeter, and saw that it showed one-and-tenpence. Nevertheless, he politely asked the driver how much the fare was. The man looked at the apparatus and said, 'Half-a-crown.' The Russian pretended that he never noticed the swindling, gave the man two-and-eightpence, and silently went his way. He did so instinctively, not wanting to make the man feel uncomfortable!

To sum up the Russian epithets of appreciation I must say that the whole row of those that build up in our mind the most charming characterization of a person is exclusively nationally-Russian. Here it is: *otzyvchivy*, *chùtki*, *privètlivy*, *làskovy*. The first two of these adjectives have been just explained; the third is derived from the definition of kind greeting and means the spontaneous gift of friendliness and sociability; a verbal translation in English would be derived from salute: but this word has no warmth emanating from it; again, *làskovy* means 'caressive,' as applied to the nature and ways of a person; it is our national variety of

the English 'goodness,' as it emphatically implies not only being good inwardly, but letting other people benefit by the visible and 'feel-able' qualities of a good heart. The Russian language would cease to be Russian without these four adjectives. All of them rolled into one in English (kind) does not satisfy us!

As far as we can judge from some new touches now finding their way into the English life, it seems that war is adding some *lâskovost'* and *chùtkost'* to the English kindness. If I may pass a Russian's opinion on this evolution—it is a beautiful one. England is swarming with kind people, but they sometimes fail to satisfy us. So many of the kind English people are not at all *interesting!*—while with us this is another quality essential as an ingredient of attractiveness. No one who is *chùtki* can fail in being interesting, because a *chùtki* person has refined feelers in his mind and heart for everything, near or far, as it were, and you cannot fail being interesting in your turn if you take interest in other people's interests. Whereas one can be 'very kind' without emerging from one's own castle and without listening to the vibrations of the world around. 'Many-sided' is a term of great appreciation with us (versus the English 'specialist'), and always is understood to go alongside with the definition 'chùtki.'

I knew an English lady shop-keeper of seventy-five who used to tell me with immense satisfaction:

‘ I was born in this house, married in it, and lived in it always, and hope to die in it ’ (she did). ‘ We were so happy ! Neither my dear husband nor myself ever wanted to go anywhere else, and I have scarcely been on any other road in this place than that between our gate and the church. We had no children, you see, so there was no need to bustle about, and I never had any trouble with our servants, because we were always kind to them. I feel so thankful for my happy life ! ’ she would add in perfect sincerity.

Well, that woman was always called ‘ Dear, kind old soul ! ’ But—I wonder whether this war would have given her a beneficial shock, if she had lived now. Certainly, her example is an extreme one, but extremes very often are the best means of explaining an idea, and I would just like to show the difference between the English conception of kindness, or good heart, and our conception of *lâskovost’* (caressiveness), *otzyvchivost’* (responsiveness), and *chutkost’* (!! . . .) all of them being absolutely essential features of a good heart, as we understand it. A fine violin-string answers not only to the touch of its master’s fingers, but to a breeze sending its whisper through the open window, to the light step of a butterfly that rests on it for a second, and to every mellow voice ringing in the house. . . .

\*            \*            \*            \*            \*



Another very Russian word, a noun, is *prostòr* (there is another one, *razdòlye*, for the same idea). It breathes of the distinctively Slavonic passion for yet another aspect of freedom. It bursts from Russian lips at the sight of space, far vistas, broad rivers, blue seas, steppes, golden corn-fields waving from horizon to horizon. . . . Beautiful scenery which has no *prostòr* about it is certainly admired and enjoyed, but after a while one longs for places where one can see wide, wide distances—even if these are but flat valleys with ‘a few birch-trees, a few pines, some moss, some sand, some clay, some marshes . . . .’ I knew of an ordinary priest from the district of Kalùga, in the centre of Russia, who was once sent with the staff of a Grand Duke to Abàss-Tumàn—a place of almost fantastic beauty in the heart of the Caucasian mountains. Being somewhat plump and simple, the man did not trouble to make any excursions. He stayed the whole summer in the magnificent glen where the palace was situated, and he very nearly pined away.

The beloved Russian conception: Prostòr.

‘Well, Father Vasili, did you like the Caucasus?’ people asked him on his return.

‘Couldn’t see any of it,’ he answered indifferently: ‘Mountains on your right, mountains on your left. Nothing to be seen at all. What a difference here, in our Kalùjskaya Guberniya!’ and he stroked his large beard with profound relief.

The Kalùjskaya district is as flat as a pancake.

This typical incident came home to me when I was showing an excursion party of Russians the beauties of Oxford. They enthusiastically went into all the details of historical architecture, but an afternoon on the winding tree-sheltered Cherwell failed to impress them, and seemed to rob them of all their vitality. So next morning I took them to the riverside, beyond Port Meadow.

'A-ah!' they breathed deeply, many of them throwing out their arms, 'here is a bit of *prostòr*!'

The word vastness exists in English, but it does not convey anything like so much to the English mind as *prostòr* conveys to a Russian one. The longing for *prostòr* is ingrained in the Russian heart. That is why our smallest towns are leisurely spread over ground which might hold ten times more houses; and that is why no one would think of building a house more than one story high which is intended for one family only: one likes to feel room, space all around one, before anything else. That is also why our ceilings are built considerably higher than those in the English houses of corresponding size.

*Prostòr* suggests to us endless possibilities; it is the seed-bed of creative impulse; it pours into Russian art its power of witching charm, and fills the Russian heart to overflowing with the power

of love. The sense of size and space impels a Russian to throw out his arms 'to embrace Nature, brothers, foes and friends. . . .' These are the words of a wonderful poem by Count Alexèy Tolstoy. . . .

At this time embracing foes does not particularly appeal to the Russian mind, but it needed much appalling cruelty to weaken this characteristic of all-forgiveness. Besides, *prostòr* is a call for free-thought, for activity, for throwing oneself open, not merely physically, but spiritually, developing the mental receptivity. That is why every new idea, social or religious, is absorbed so speedily all over the immense land.

I understand that, coming out on a fine morning, feeling 'full of beans,' an Englishman somewhat approaches the feeling which a Russian experiences when his mood is blending with the surrounding *prostòr*. If I am right, then the following simple verses by the modern poet Igor' Sever'anin, which are translatable almost literally, must carry the atmosphere with them:

'The day of spring is hot and golden,  
The town is blinded by the sun.  
I am myself again! I'm merry,  
I'm young, and happy, and in love!  
My soul will sing, will fly to meadows,  
All strangers look akin to me!  
*What a prostòr!* What boundless freedom!  
What songs to sing! What flow'rs to see!

Swing noisily, Springly-daring forest !  
 Grow quickly, grass ! Come, lilac, bloom !  
 Evil is dead, all worship justice  
 On a halcyon day that's come so soon !'

There is no Russian writer, warrior, Tsar', priest, or peasant who has not used the word *prostòr* over and over again in his life lovingly. Why, even hopeless bureaucrats and police are sure to love the *prostòr*—physically, at least, if their spiritual longing for it has been atrophied !

\* \* \* \* \*

Mr. Pearsall Smith, in his book, *The English Language*, says:

'The progress in English is due, not to the prosperity of the nation, but to the national disasters—the Danish invasion and the Norman Conquest.'

Foreign  
words in  
the Rus-  
sian lan-  
guage.

Now, we had no such beneficent invasions ! Russia was coming into existence through her own turmoil. Peter the Great brought the first series of Latin-rooted and Teutonic words with his organization of the States-machinery and introduction of scientific technique into the land. A good many of these Western words are still in constant use, and some of them have no equivalent in the original Russian. And here the Russians ought to be blamed for their ever-present passion for 'the new light from the West'; for in most cases pure Russian words could be brought in by merely thinking of them, owing to the creative elasticity

of the Slavonic roots. It is a perfect shame that numbers of Latinisms are used by some modern Russian journalists as a kind of literary *chic*; while the French '*merci*' is used by nearly all the town population (particularly so by the half-educated ones), though we have two genuine expressions for 'thank you': the latter in Russian, once upon a time, meant 'I give you the gift of good' (*blago-dar'u*); and there is also another word, just as Russian, although it has lost its ancient form by having dropped the last letter: this word for 'thank you' used to mean: 'God save you' (*Spassì Bog*. Now it is *spassìbo*).

The logical analytical subtlety of the Russian grammar is boundless. I know two ardent English philologists who say that it beats both Greek and Latin, and needs a knowledge of several Western languages to follow its precise but winding paths and its creative power.

For one thing, the syllables of nuances have in Russian a magic power. Those few that exist in English (*unlimited*, *bespeak*, *speechless*, *trespass*, *overcome*) will explain to the reader what I mean by this denomination. But with us the nuances are ever so much more numerous and various: they include all prepositions (to beat *through*, to come *out*, to come *in*), which are, for the purpose, inseparably attached to the beginning of the word; and, besides, there are many syllables of nuances which mean nothing in themselves, but make all

The all-  
powerful  
Syllables  
of  
Nuances.

the difference to the verbs. One of them, for instance, consists of two or three letters—*vz* or *voz*—and is never used as a preposition separately, but, joined to a word, it gives it an idea of height or suddenness. Thus the verb *br'estì* means to wander about; *nabr'estì* means to come across something; but *vzbr'estì* is used exclusively in connection with a thought which has sprung up in the brain unaccountably. Again, the root *doh* conveys the idea of spirit, and *vzdoh* means 'sigh'! Rather subtle.

An interesting instance of this nuance is to be found in the Bible: Christ's words 'as I have loved you' contain in Russian the word *l'ubil* (loved) with the syllable *voz* preceding it: *vozl'ubil*. Thus the word conveys the atmosphere of greatest intensity, of greatest height of love possible. We still use this nuance with the verb 'to love' under grave, deeply-felt circumstances.

The verb used for indicating the winding of a brook, or of a path, is transformed by the same two letters into one that pictures the spiral masses of smoke and flames suddenly bursting from a burning building (*vitsa*, *vzvitsa*). *Mòre* means sea; but *vzmorye* means strand—*i.e.*, a kind of place which runs right up to the sea.

A beautiful new word has been recently introduced by the young writer, Count Alexèy Tolstòy, for indicating a hilly district: he called it a *vshòlm-lennaya* district: *holm* meaning hill, he makes it,

as it were, a 'vs-hillied' district. It makes one's thoughts fly back for a moment to the days when the crust of the globe was undergoing the stage of being *vs-hillied*!

*Bit'* means to beat, but *ubit'* means to kill; there is an in-between meaning, too, created by a different syllable of nuance—*pobit'*: it means to give an extra vigorous beating; *vybit'* means to fight someone to the effect of driving him out of his position, and therefore is also (quite logically) applied to knocking and beating moths out of old furs or blankets. But *nabit'* has an opposite meaning: it is a verb applied to filling a pipe with tobacco, or stuffing one's head with nonsense.

A quaint transformation happens to the word *stol*: it means table, but in the ancient days probably meant stool as well, because, with the addition of one little nuance—*prestol*—it turns into a 'throne': this particular syllable conveying here the idea of—'What a table! Such a table! A super-table!'

Again, *vrat'* means to tell lies vigorously (*lgat'* stands for doing the same moderately); *privràt'* means just to add a dose of fiction to cold truth—with the longing for effect, maybe! Again, *trus* means coward; and *trusovàt* means not quite a coward, but one who does not like to expose himself to 'unnecessary unpleasantness.'

The syllable *na* often adds to a verb a nuance of great gentleness: thus, the verb 'to press'—with *na* preceding the root—means that sort of pressure which a doctor would put into his fingers when examining the aching body of an invalid; (*jat'*, *najat'*). 'To sing,' with that same adjoining syllable, means to sing as gently as one sings a lullaby, or to hum unconsciously while working (*p'et'*, *nap'evat'*). The verb 'to feel' (*shchùpat'*) with one's fingers is quite a different one with us from the verb conveying the idea of feeling with one's heart (*chùstvovat'*); well, the syllable *na* added to the first one, meaning to feel with one's fingers, makes a verb which is now used in the description of searchlights moving in the dark (*nashchùpat'*). . . . On other occasions the syllable *na* adds a decisive touch to the action: *Zvat'* = to call someone; *nazvat'* = to call someone a certain name. *Brat'* = to take; *nabràt'* = to take a lot of something. *L'et'et'* = to fly; *nal'et'et'* = to fly against something, etc.

What transformations various syllables of nuances can effect when preceding the same verb can be seen from the column below: the top word consists of the one-syllable root only; each of the following ones has a different nuance joining on to it which changes the meaning of that one-syllable root thus:



To become	<i>Stat'</i> .	Or: To give	<i>Davàt'</i> .
To come into		To sell	<i>Prodavàt'</i> .
being	<i>Nastàt'</i> .	To publish	<i>Izdavàt'</i> .
To get up	<i>Vstat'</i> .	To distribute	<i>Razdavàt'</i> .
To get tired	<i>Ustàt'</i> .	To pass on	<i>Peredavàt'</i> .
To stop	<i>Perestàt'</i> .	To give a task	<i>Zadavàt'</i> .
To stick to	<i>Pristàt'</i> .	To deal (cards,	
To find (some-		or to pass ex-	
one) in	<i>Zastàt'</i> .	aminations)	<i>Sdavàt'</i> .
		To add	<i>Pridavàt'</i> .
		To envelop	
		suddenly	<i>Obdavàt'</i> .

Or, here is one of the cases of a transformation of a noun; the root of this particular one meaning 'go'—in any manner except on foot.

*Syèzd*—A conference in general. Also the time when people have begun to assemble for a certain meeting.

*Razyezd*—The time when people are dispersing after some meeting.

*Podyezd*—The front porch (the place which one drives up to).

*Vyèzd*—A drive leading into some place. Also the moment of the arrival of some prominent person or party.

*Priyèzd*—The arrival of ordinary mortals!

*Vyiezd*—A drive leading out, or the moment of departure both on ordinary and special occasions.

*Obyèzd*—A drive round a place, or 'being on a round of —'

*Proyèzd*—A drive through a place. *N'et proyèzda!* = No thoroughfare!

*Nayèzdy* (plur.)—Casual visits from time to time.

The characteristics and flexibility of the verb 'to be.'

The one syllable that makes the verb 'to be' (*byt'*) is transformed by different preceding syllables of nuances into:

To be	<i>Byt'</i>
To stay at or in	<i>Probyt'</i>
To get rid of	<i>Sbyt'</i>
To do one's part of	<i>Otbyt'</i>
To decrease	<i>Ubyt'</i>
To fall out (of the ranks, of a list)	<i>Vybyt'</i>
To arrive	<i>Pribyt'</i>
To forget	<i>Zabyt'</i>

The example, by the way, is the case when a whole English expression is necessary to convey the meaning of the two-syllable word for each conception. But this is not often the case. We could not write stories of one-syllable words like those written for little children in English.

The last transformation of the verb *to be* is very quaint: the syllable of nuance *za* which does it, means, originally, behind, or beyond. Therefore, to forget really means in Russian 'to be beyond being.' . . . A certain termination turns it into forgetfulness (*zabývchivost'*), and another into unconsciousness (*zabýtye*). This is rather fine, I think. Corresponding with this, the Russian for 'faint' (*òbmorok*) carries the ancient idea of being made a fool by means of witchcraft.

Some unique points about the verb *to be* in

Russian are worth mentioning. For one thing it is never, never used in the ordinary way—*i.e.*, in the present tense—as it is in all other European languages. We never say, ‘I am ill,’ ‘we are here,’ ‘you are kind,’ ‘the children are in the house,’ ‘they are in the garden,’ ‘he is in town,’ etc. The verb is omitted entirely.

‘How do you say, then, “I am”?’ the English people ask me.

But we don’t find any need to say ‘I am’! Not just by itself. When we want to say, ‘I am hungry,’ ‘I am glad,’ ‘I am here,’ ‘I am at home,’ etc., we simply say, ‘I hungry,’ ‘I glad,’ ‘I here,’ ‘I at home’; the special short termination of the adjective expresses in itself a state of the object, and stands as a predicate, whilst a long termination expresses only a quality. It is only when a special emphasis is needed that ‘is’ is used—but only ‘is’ in the third person singular—never in any of the others: ‘There is money in my purse,’ ‘there is time to do it,’ ‘there is a chance of winning the war,’ etc. It is also used in questions: ‘Is there time to do it?’ ‘Is there a chance of winning the war?’ But even here this third person singular (*is = yest*) is applied to convey exclusively the *idea of possession*: I have time = *u men’à yest vrèm’a*. This is done because the verb ‘to have’ is hardly ever used either, as the *idea of something or other being there* replaces in Russian the *idea of possession*.

We don't use the verbs to have or to be as auxiliary verbs, either, because we need no auxiliaries, having no complex tenses (except one, for the Imperfective future).

Thus the verb *byt'* (to be) is altogether in a very unique position; it is not at all needed in the ordinary way; but its importance comes in where it is non-existent in other languages: namely, it is rich in suggestion, and certain definitions are derived from it which are exclusively Russian. For instance, there is the verbal noun *bylòye* which stands for 'things which really happened long ago.' There is a touch of poetry in it, of thoughtful reminiscences. Or here is another definition (a pure noun) *byl'*, which is used in direct opposition to fiction. To some one's query, 'Is this a fib?' you answer, 'No! it is *byl'*!' = *N'èt, byl'*! It is a thing which really has been, has taken place; hence, the name for the ancient folk-epic is *bylìnny*. The future tense in the Old Slavonic of this verb is *bùd'e*; well, quaintly enough, added to the beginning of a phrase it means 'in case if'; whilst its past tense, *bylo*, added to the end of *the same* phrase, means 'was about to.'

Or here is still another noun from the same verb: the *byt*. (The only difference in the spelling of this word, from the same three letters representing the infinitive, consists in the letter *t* being hard instead of soft.) We use this noun to define, *en masse*, the manners of life, the code of existence

of any class of people. We say—the *byt* of provincial actors, the *byt* of courtiers, the *byt* of a farmer, of a peasant, of students, of the soldiers in the trenches—the general routine of their life, as it were. This definition leads, in its turn, to the adjective *bytovòy*, which is applied to character rôles, to character sketches, to national features. Again, the future is called, in Russian, *bùdushcheye*, an adjective participle of the verb to be. Thus the latter is interwoven in the Russian speech closely enough, but in quite a different way to the purely grammatical and even the auxiliary one in which it runs through the Western languages.

Or here are a few columns of words built round the same root, as it were, through the addition of various *terminations* and different *syllables* of Further transformations of words. *nuances*. They make some remarkable series of conceptions, *all of them threaded together quite logically* :

Spirit, breath	Duh. <sup>1</sup> (Root: <i>duh</i> or <i>doh</i> .)
Ghosts	Dùhi.
Perfumes	Duhi.
Air	Vòzduh.
Closeness (of air)	Duhotà.
Soul	Dushà.
To strangle	Dushit'.
Waft	Dunovèniye.
Rest	Òtdyh.
The spiritual part of hospitality	Radùshiye.
Fragrance	Dushìstost'.
Unanimity	Yedinòdùshiye.

<sup>1</sup> The substitute in this root of an *o* or a *y* for the *u* in some of the words makes no difference, being commanded by sound only.

Generosity	Velikodùshiye.
Simplicity of mind	Prostodùshiye.
Good nature	Dobrodùshiye.
Clergy	Duhovènstvo.
Sigh	Vzdòh.
Darling	Dùshechka.
Last will	Duhòvnaya.
Oven	Duhovàya.
Ventilator	Otdùshina.

There is a verb belonging to this set of derivations which is applied to the dying of animals—*izdyhàt'* or *izdòhnut'*. It conveys the idea of a very solitary, painful death, just 'letting out breath,' and is applied to human death only in the way of a curse. (There is yet another term for the animals' dying, but it has nothing to do with our present case.) The translators never know what to do with this *izdòhnut'*. Sometimes they put 'choking' for it, which is not very far from it grammatically, but gives none of its rudeness. In one of Gor'ki's passages, the whole power of the gloomy situation is lost, as the author uses two verbs of the same root. . . . It occurs in the bitter reminiscences of a Volga-burlàk, who is telling of his youth, when he was towing heavily-laden, huge barges up the current of the river, month in and month out: 'One suddenly tumbles down with one's face buried in the sand. . . . Even this comes as a relief. . . . The strength has whizzed out, and only two things remain possible at all: either *otdyhàt* or *izdyhàt*. . . .' Glancing at the column above, my reader will see the differ-

ence which the little syllable *ot* makes in this case, and will realize the bitterness of the Russian sentence which means that the only alternative to resting would be dying like a homeless beast.

Here are some other examples of what I would call 'logical twisting':

Truth	Pràvda. (Root: <i>prav.</i> )
Rule	Pràvilo.
Right	Pràvo.
Correctness	Pràvil'nost'.
Administration	Pravlèniye.
Management	Upravlèniye.
Government	Pravitel'stvo.
Crossing (of a river)	Perepràva.
Justice	Sprav'edl'ivost'.
Inquiry	Spràvka.
Training	Vÿpravka.
Correction	Popràvka.
Direction	Napravlèniye.
Jurisprudence	Pravovèdeniye.
Orthodoxy	Pravoslàviye.
To lead	Vodit'. (Root: <i>vod.</i> )
To wind up	Zavodit'.
Belt (of an engine)	Privòd.
Factory	Zavòd.
Code (of laws)	Svod (zakònov).
Fishing-net	Nèvod.
Company (of a battalion)	Vzvod.
Translation	Perevòd.
Cart	Podvòda.
Formation (in army)	Stroy. (Root: <i>stroy.</i> )
Mode (in music)	Stroy.
Stateliness	Stròynost'.
Building	Postròyka, Stroyèniye.
Arrangement	Ustròystvo.
Mood	Nastroyèniye.
Piano-tuner	Nastròyshchik.

I hope it is also clear from these groups of words that they are quite different from casual likeness,

such as in cab and cabbage, or pen and penguin, or pot and potato, etc. In English, a parallel to the logically-threaded sets of Russian nouns would be, for instance:

Pedal.		Point.
Pedlar.	Or	Appointment.
Expedition.		Disappointment.

Some interesting examples like these do exist, but not so many and not so rich as in Russian, because the syllables of nuances in English are considerably fewer in themselves, and, what is more, not applicable to so many nouns and verbs,<sup>1</sup> while the eloquent terminations are quite absent.

Altogether, we could not do without a choice of terminations. They make a world of difference. We like a word to obey the minutest vibration of our thought. This flexibility is quite different to the English manner of stringing different nouns like beads on a string—as in: War Office Harvest Women; or, Lake Asphalt Pavement Company; Red Cross Subscription List, etc., etc.

The power  
of term-  
inations.

For instance, different terminations added to the root which means 'old' give the noun, at your desire, any of the following meanings:

<sup>1</sup> For instance, in the second of the groups given above only three of the English definitions, correctness, correction, and direction (one could add director), are derived from the root *rect*, the equivalent to which in Russian—*prav*—goes for building up a much greater variety of conceptions.



The times of yore	Starinà.
Old age	Stàrost'.
Old man	Starik.
A fine old man	Stàretz.
A dear old man	Starichòk.
A miserable, shrivelled, haggard, little old man	Starikàshka.
A nasty, disgusting, little old man	Starichìshka.
Rubbish	Staryò.

Or, similar metamorphoses happen as most ordinary things to the words 'boy' and 'girl,' which, like nearly all Russian nouns, are beautifully soft wax under the powerful chisel of the language:

Boy (derivation from the adjective 'small' (màly)	Màl'chik.
A rough boy	Mal'chishka.
A nice, regular boyish boy	Mal'chugàn.
A dear little boy	Mal'chònka, Mal'chugàshka, Mal'chugànchik, Mál'chinka.

A little girl	D'èvochka.
A nice little girl	D'evchònochka.
A young girl	D'èvushka.
A rude, nasty girl, a maiden	D'evchònka.
An unmarried lady	D'evitza.
A spinster, a virgin	D'èva.
A wench	D'èvka.

Or:

Son	Syn.
Young son	Synòk.
Dear little son	Synòchek, Synìshka.
Nice great big son	Synìshche.

Or:

Daughter	Doch', Dòchka.
Dear young daughter	Dòch'en'ka, Dochurka.

The root which means small and rests with all the 'boys' words' (mal) changes its one vowel (mol) to serve the formation of the word youth, and of other conceptions akin to it. *Mòlodost'* means youth. *Molod'ètz* is the heartiest homely word of praise for both sexes, at all times and on all occasions. It is distinctly national, and used in all classes of the population. It conveys the idea that the person has achieved, as it were, all that youth can achieve. It is often translated as 'brick,' but this word has not a breath of the heroic folk-lore about it which the Russian has.

One of the prettiest sayings imbued with the old Russian heroic spirit, both in sound and meaning, translated literally runs thus: 'The past must not be thrown as a reproach at a molodètz.' This is conveyed in Russian by the four words: '*Byl'* *mòlodtzu ne ukòr.*' The definition of *byl'* has already been given (page 36) as 'things which happened long ago'; the remaining nouns also belong to the Old Russian, and the whole phrase is buoyantly alive with intense dislike of hurling reproach at a young fellow for the wild oats of his past, now that he is really a *molod'ètz*!

There is one more popular word coming from the same nucleus, which is constantly applied in Russia: it is *molod'òj*, a noun used only in the singular—a general definition of the younger generation, but never applied otherwise than in a nice

sense. Here is an expression from a recent newspaper article which describes, in a few words, the masses of the younger generation 'just behind the lines': 'All this *molod'òj*, with lovable, bright faces, longing to breathe, to work and to love. . . .'

\* \* \* \* \*

A new word has now entered into the vistas of the Russian language. Politically and historically, the Germans are called in Russian *Germàntzy*. Yet there has always existed another name for them which has absolutely acquired 'all social rights,' and has been very widely used even in official nomenclature: this name is *N'èmtzy* (in plural). Absolutely independent of any ethnological or philological sources, this word must have come solely from its own root, which means *dumb*, and nothing else but dumb—*n'emòy*. In the olden days the Germans must have been thus christened by a simple Slavonic population to whom they were just as good as dumb. (There exists an idea, though, that the name of the river N'eman has helped to foster it.) This theory is backed up by another, which states that the definition of the Germans as of 'dumb' people came as a natural contrast to the definition *Slavs* = *Slav'àn'e*, the root of the latter being derived from *slòvo* = word.

A new  
word for  
the Ger-  
mans.

But now, when a mass of Germans have risen as an obstinate power of greater importance than ever before, the instinctive wit of the *soldàt'ik*

(soldier) has promptly accommodated itself to the demands of the moment: the official word for a German, *Germàn'etz*, is taken, its last syllable is altered in a way never before known, and a new definition is ready! Its nuance is absolutely distinct, and makes everyone smile who knows the riches of the language: the name is *germanchùk*. As can be easily seen, the biggest part of it fully acknowledges the German birthright, so to speak. But that ending *chùk*—well! I wish it were possible to interpret the seeming elegance of the word, the humour of its condescension!

But there existed, even before now, a special twist to the word *n'èmetz*, which distinctly conveyed an attitude of neglect: it sounds *n'emchurà*. It is a word that needs puckering one's upper lip in order to pronounce it in its intended tone: it alludes to 'those Germans!' whose greatest power does not surpass making sausages. . . . It is very likely, therefore, that this shape of the word is not used any more now, unless it has acquired a nuance of hatred.

A new  
reading of  
an old  
word.

The word *soldàt'ik* itself was not used at the time when regiments were ordered to shoot at revolutionary crowds, and when soldiers were, therefore, regarded with bitter reproach and painful astonishment. No! The creative power of the language gives an absolutely different aspect to the soldier as a man, as compared to the soldier as a weapon

in the hands of a reactionary government, simply through applying to him now this slightly altered name, which has lost all its Western flavour, although coming from 'soldat.' The quiet hero, the *soldât'ik*, now no more made unnaturally brutal, has his name on everyone's lips and in everyone's heart throughout the vast land while he is fighting the n'èmetz, who, according to a mockingly-respectful saying, *has invented the monkey!* (Нѣмецъ обезьяну выдумалъ.)

\* \* \* \* \*

It may be of interest, perhaps, to say a few words about the manner in which the Russians address each other. Many times I have heard English people say that it seems as if we had ever so many names, and that one could not make out in the translations who was who, for each person was addressed in at least three different ways. The explanation can be made quite easy by a parallel. Suppose English people had, like ourselves, only one name given to them in baptism; and added to it the father's name—which in former times was of the nature of a genitive—and placed after that the surname, the result would be, for an English brother and sister: Richard Edwardovich Hodgkin and Dorothy Edwardovna Hodgkina. Well, they would still retain their personalities if they were called Dick and Dora by those who addressed them with a 'thou,' or Richard

The Russian method of address.

Edwardovich and Dorothy Edwardovna in the customary social manner of all classes, or simply Hodgkin or Hodgkina in the third person. In the same way, the Russian Al'osha, or Alexèy Feòdorovich, or Karamàzov, all stand for the same person in Dostoyèvski's great novel. And so it is always. If people have titles you call them: Prince Nikolày Vasilyevich, or Count Pàvel Petròvich, or Princess Ol'ga Alexèyevna, or whatever they are. Old servants, without waiting for any permission, often address their masters as: Bàrin (master) Vladìmir Sergèyevich, or bàt'ushka (father) Sergèy Vladìmirovich, or bàryn'a (mistress) Ol'ga Ivànovna, or màtushka (mother) Vèra Vasilyevna, or whatever their case may be.

On attaining, with the growth of love or friendship, the intimate state of addressing each other with a 'thou' in the place of 'you,' we drop the full Christian name and father's name, and call people by their shortened names, which, it is true, have no end of varieties. The richness in the numerous shades of meaning which the choice of terminations adds to the language is brilliantly illustrated by these various shortened names. You only have to select this or that ending from all those which a certain shortened name possesses, and your feelings, your attitude at the given moment towards the addressed person is sun-clear! Thus, if you usually call a boy (whose Christian

name in full is Dmitri) Mit'ùsha, Mit'ùshka, Mit'ik, Mìt'en'ka, Mit'unchik, Mit'un'a (or something else in that line, all of it conveying much love and 'caressiveness' through the mere forms of the endings, while simply Mit'a is indifferent)—and then he suddenly hears you calling him Mìt'ka, he knows that something is wrong! Mìt'ka, as well as Kòl'ka, Vàn'ka, Sàshka, etc. (instead of the corresponding affectionate forms Kol'ùsha, Vànichka, Sashùrka, etc.), carry in themselves your vexation, even anger, without any further explanation. Only one certain very Russian intonation of the voice gives them a humorously-tolerant aspect: between country boys this aspect is very popular, and the touch of rudeness disappears from those brisk endings; but, when given to girls' names (Natàshka, Màshka, Matr'òshka), they invariably convey disrespect. The peasants' various forms of addressing altogether present a feast of colours!

But when we are first introduced to each other, and commence to talk, we immediately ask each other, 'What is your name?' and, on learning the Christian name and father's name, we proceed to address each other by them. It takes away the formality of Mister and Madame So-and-So which we dislike (*gospod'ìn, gospojà*), and which we use only in business or at formal introductions (very often employing for it the French 'monsieur' and

'madame'). The essentially Russian manner is universally employed as the most sociable one; therefore the name is often given in full at the first introduction, *e.g.*, Nikolàÿ Petròvich Kòlosov, or Elèna Nikolàÿevna Kòlosova. A homely, respectful way of addressing each other amongst the peasants is to use the father's name only: Petròvich, or Stepànovna, or Alexèich, or whatever the case may be.

Peter the Great used to call his statesmen in this super-homely way; but all the Tsars' rescripts, whether bringing to the man favour or disgrace, always begin with an address in the universal way: 'Much esteemed Nikolàÿ Ivànovich,' or 'Ivàn Nikolàÿevich,' or whatever the man's name may be.

\* \* \* \* \*

We are quite unable to appreciate the English expressions of intimacy: 'Lucky dog! You lucky devil! Dear old duck!' We can hardly discern any sign of friendliness in them. Not because they are slang: some English slang is magnificently expressive, and we regard it with amused admiration; but our sense of humour fails us here, and we should look upon these forms of address as very impolite—in fact, quite offensive!

Our favourite birds, whose names make very poetic Old Russian terms of admiration and friendliness, are less placid and useful than a duck. They are the 'steel-winged eagle,' 'falcon-bright' and



pigeon. The last has entirely lost its connection with the idea of a pigeon, but it still remains the most popular and national term of sociability in Russia. (Pigeon is *gòlub'*; and this favourite term is *golùbchik*.) I am purposely calling it a term of sociability because that is where its main character lies. It is not by a long way a term of endearment used exclusively by lovers. It comes into any lively conversation, and is used by, and for, man or woman, prince or beggar; what is more, it enters our everyday speech not only as a kindly form of address, but also as a humorous one or one of sympathetic condescension. It is seldom translated correctly, simply because it has so many shades, and because it needs all those numerous intonations with which the Russian speech is permeated. Sweetheart or pigeon, which are mostly used in translations as its equivalent in English, are both of them far too sentimental.

An ordinary term of sociability.

'my dear fellow'

The gravest statesman, discussing and arguing over most serious matters, will now and again put in the '*golùbchik*,' unless the discussion is very formal. Drivers will encouragingly call out, '*Hey, vy (you) golùbchiki!*' to their horses, when starting them on a quick, long run. A nice, simple old woman will address every gentleman in a respectfully-familiar way as '*golùbchik bàrin*'—practically equivalent to '*darling sir*'—even if he has merely stopped her to inquire his way. A devoted old

servant, as a matter of course, calls her master or mistress golùbchik-bàrin or golùbushka-bàryn'a. A fair-minded official, when hurriedly dismissing a petitioner whose request he could not grant, would say: 'Well, golùbchik, what is to be done? Such is the law!'

It is also very often used in a friendly reproof: 'But, golùbchik——!'

What is more, it is used without hesitation even in unusual circumstances: when Dmìtri Karamàzov is being cross-examined, the old colonel of the police, who does not believe that he has killed his father, addresses him with the golùbchik in the very midst of the official inquiry.

It is an essentially Russian word.

Misunder-  
stood  
terms of  
affinity.

The way of addressing people as father, brother, and even mother, is another very Russian feature. It is high time to explain that the famous 'Little father' does not mean 'little' father at all! The Old Russian word for father, *bàt'ushka*, does not suggest an atom of the tone in which 'little father,' or the German 'Vaterchen,' is pronounced. This way of translating it is sickly-sentimental! No, *bat'ushka* is used either in a grave, deferential way—and that is how it came first to be applied in the olden days to the Princes and later to the Tsars, and is still the habitual form of addressing the priests; or else it is used in a very argumentative tone, essentially Russian, called up in quick discussion, which one

never hears in English society, and therefore is hardly explicable: it carries some familiarity, some respect, some rebuke, some humour, some surprise—very often all of them at the same time!

For instance, the simple-minded small land-owner Koròbochka ('little box') in Gogol's *Dead Souls*, admitting the hero into her cottage on a wretched, stormy night, and seeing him smothered with mud—the result of his having been just overturned with his vehicle in a ploughed field—asks him, a perfect stranger to her: 'But where didst thou be-filth thyself like a boar, bàt'ushka?'

When the investigation lawyer most artfully sounds Raskòlnikov (*Crime and Punishment*) throughout his Machiavellian diatribe, he constantly addresses him as bàt'ushka, or golùbchik, although he is sure of his listener's guilt from the commencement.

'Mother' is used in a similar manner, with a similar twist to the word—*màtushka*; and, what is very quaint indeed, men sometimes use it in addressing each other, when the tone of the argument gets somewhat hot: 'Well, màtushka, that's a bit of that!'—which stands for, 'Well, sir, that's a bit far-fetched!'

But here I should add that it would be altogether impossible to converse in Russian, using so few forms of address as are used by the English. On coming to live here, we sometimes feel quite awk-

ward in being spoken to as if we were nonentities, without any names or personalities. With us, the usual form of address is the one just discussed above (see p. 46), or a shortened Christian name in one of its numerous shapes, or *golùbchik*, or brother, or father, in one of their previous applications—something or other is always there, besprinkling the speech, so that you feel sure that it is you whom the speaker keeps in his mind and not the general public.

‘Ladies and gentlemen’ is used on occasions similar to those in English; only literally it runs ‘gracious sovereigns and gracious sovereignesses’—which sounds still more quaint in English than it does in Russian. It is that same word, sovereign—*Gosudàr*—which is a homely-loyal manner of speaking of and to the Tsars, a very ancient word, too, coming from the times when a prince would be regarded as the chief of his land, just as every man was the chief of his household. Therefore, the old expression *Gosudàr*-*bàt*’*ushka* (sovereign-father) would be applied in the olden days equally to a monarch as to a master of any house, conveying an equal amount of respect and of homeliness. Nowadays, of course, it has lost its popularity with the Tsars as well as with ordinary mortals, the equipoise having become less balanced in both cases: the Tsars being now less accessible than the ancient princes, and the modern householder

less lord of all he surveys than his ancient prototype.

But 'gracious sovereigns' (*mìlostivye gosudàri i mìlostivya gosudàryni*) still is the proper customary official way of addressing a society of men and women, though only at the commencement of a meeting. When the meeting is in full swing, or unofficial, the speaker addresses it with '*gospodà!*' This is a word which formerly was only a plural form of 'master,' but now includes anyone in any company. It means 'gentry,' as used by domestic servants about their masters; but it is also the most natural and sociable manner of addressing a company of one's equals, without which we could not live in Russia one single day (unless one was a hermit). With us the conversation is usually a general one, shared by most persons in the room, and one constantly addresses a whole group of people. The only time when one must not address them as '*gospodà*' is when all around you are officially of a much higher rank than yourself, which is rather a contrast to the handling of the same word by servants. But if you regard your audience as ordinary mortals like yourself, you cannot avoid this form of address. Thus, even Dmìtri Karamàzov, facing the authorities who came to arrest him at his orgy (suspecting him of the murder of his father), adds to every few words of his: 'Come, *gospodà*, it is a terrible accu-

Indispensable Russian form of address.

sation. . . . What a pity, *gospodà* !—because he speaks sincerely, and the usual way of addressing these people as equals comes naturally to him.

‘*Gospodà*’ is not exactly ‘gentlemen,’ because students of both sexes, school children, ladies, girls, are all addressed as *gospodà* in speaking. Al’osha Karamàzov uses it even when speaking to small school boys. A girl stretcher-bearer carrying in on her shoulders still another wounded soldier into an already over-filled dressing-station, will call out to the doctors: ‘*Gospodà, gospodà, one more; we must make room for him !*’

But the wounded men would feel more at home with her if she addressed them as ‘*bràtzy.*’ This word is translated usually in that same sentimental manner as ‘little brothers.’ I cannot help putting it in this way, because these English expressions (little father, little brothers, little mother)—supposed to be equivalent to the Russian expressions—really make us turn up our noses ! There is no littleness whatever about *bàt’ushka, bràtzy, or màtushka.* Big boys do not address their little brothers as *bràtzy* in a patronizing way; on the contrary, it is the small, business-like boys, who will address older fellows as *bràtzy*, when talking in the grave way the Russian *mujik* has about him from the age of six or seven. By the way, one of the most striking contrasts between the English

Another  
side-light.

and the Russian peasant children is this: an English boy seems to me to try to be as funny and rowdy as possible from the age of six up to sixteen, whereas his little Russian confrère of seven or eight presents quite a different picture: he puts on his grandfather's top-boots and old, huge fur gloves, his own sheepskin *tulúpchik*, and walks for days on end at the side of a sledge-load of wood, leading the horse between the house and the forest—his sole ambition being to express all the dignity of labour in his mien and gait.

Bràtzy, applied by the nurses and officers talking to their men, conveys sociable appreciation. All peasants and workmen address their crowds as bràtzy (which is nice and simple) and not bràtya (which is biblical and puritan—unless it stands for real brother). There is warmth, caress, and respectful comradeship in the expression bràtzy. Mrs. Constance Garnett translates bràtzy as boys, fellows, or gentlemen. This is better than 'little' brothers. It should be made clear that there is no vestige of belittling in these Russian nouns of affinity, despite their seemingly diminutive terminations.

The 'little father,' 'little mother,' and 'little brothers' ought to be banished from the English translations by fire and sword! They are unbearably sentimental. There are no parallel forms in English to the Russian shades of these

nouns, so let them, at least, remain simply 'father' and 'brothers.'

As it is, all the varieties of the words son, daughter, and even children, remain necessarily untranslatable. You cannot say anything different in English except adding to them that old, monotonous epithet 'little,' while in Russian there is a variety of terminations meaning neither this adjective nor 'brat' nor 'kid.' For instance, *synìshche* means a big, nice *syn* (son), with a touch of humour in it; while *synìshka* is exclusively caressive. There is a selection of varieties for 'children': *d'èti* (the plain, original form of the word), *d'ètki*, *d'etìshki*, *d'ètochki*, and *d'etvorà*, the last being a very appreciative collective definition, implying the idea of the little folks with all their own interests included as it were—a parallel to *molod'òj* (see p. 42).

Russian  
words for  
'chil-  
dren.'

Not that we object to 'kids' or 'brats.' The Russian slang applied to children is equally unique, only we use it with more condescending humour, I think. We call them 'bubbles,' or by a special humorously-caressive word, '*karapùz*', which means a round, solid, comically-grave little figure. 'Bubble'—*puzýr*'—is also very pretty, conveying much love, and should not be translated as 'kid.' I think English readers would appreciate the parallel of a nice, full-cheeked fatty to a bright soap bubble.

\* \* \* \* \*



It would be only fair to say a few words about the Russian expression *n'ichevò*, which has acquired much misleading fame abroad. This is about the only Russian word which is widely known—and it is misunderstood. It is always quoted with a smile, as it means ‘never mind, this is nothing!’ and is supposed to be the main characteristic of a nonchalant people. But one should thoroughly know the Russians to estimate this expression of theirs fairly. True, with us it is ‘*n'ichevò*’ when people walk into the room without knocking; or come without invitation at any time for the simple reason that they wish to see you; or men don’t walk on the outside of the pavement (which they have never been told to do), or get up from their seats and pace the room up and down, in the heat of a discussion during the course of a meal; all this is certainly ‘*n'ichevò*,’ because these points are but trifles to a Russian mind, and the Westerner may smile with disgust or condescension at the thought of such manners! It is certainly ‘*n'ichevò*’ for a young girl of good family and the best education to go about with one or many male friends wherever she wants to—because no one hurries to suspect immorality hidden by social interests, nor to build up a scaffolding of inevitable matrimony around them. It is a universally adopted custom resulting from a sensible, interesting, natural, and useful

equality of the sexes. With the French and English this is rather far from 'n'ichevò!' and they smile, unless they are actually shocked.

But one should be far from smiling at a Russian man who says seriously and whole-heartedly, 'n'ichevò!' as he marries a girl with a tragic past who is left with a child. Nor is it improper when a young lady utters a sincere, gentle, encouraging 'n'ichevò!' whilst doing unpleasant work in assisting a shy and helpless man whom she sees, perhaps, for the first time in her life. Nor is a 'n'ichevò' funny when uttered with a smile by a *soldàt'ik*, who is creeping towards the dressing-station wounded in his shoulder, side, and leg.

There are indeed very different occasions on which the Russians will say 'n'ichevò.'

True, again, a Russian will fly down a long, steep hill in his sledge, cart, or brougham, and will say 'n'ichevò!' if the vehicle happens to go into the ditch at the bottom of the hill. But in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred it would not do so, because rushing down a hill is a universally beloved thing, to which generations of horses have been used since the time when the Russian land first 'began to be.' And if a driver did not rise in his seat, and let all the reins loose, and shout words of love and encouragement to them, at the sight of a steep road downwards, the horses would think that something had gone unmistakably wrong.

\* \* \* \* \*

There is, amongst many others, one certain series of nouns, which have all of them grown out of the same root. However quaint it may look at the first glance, we can easily find that they are threaded together by the idea lurking in that root. The latter is *rod*, which means kin, kind. The other nouns are: nature, relationship, people, harvest, birth, homeland, Christmas (*priròda, rodstvò, naròd, urojày, rojdèniye, ròdina, rojdestvò*). Amongst the numerous adjectives which, in their turn, have grown out of these nouns, there is one which I cannot omit. It is impossible to speak of the Russian language without mentioning the word *rodnòy*. Mr. Rothay Reynolds, in his book, *My Russian Year*, says that he found the Russian language one to make love in; and an American, who has stayed in Russia during sixteen months of the war, wrote the other day that the Russians 'love to love.' This is very true—but, please, include all rays of love! All her numerous, wonderful rays! And then you will understand, perhaps, why the most caressive and beautiful of all Russian love-words is derived from that root. You call *rodnòy* your beloved one (only mind the gender!); you call *rodnàya* your mother, and your land (which is feminine); you apply the same adjective to your really beloved friends; you say that a song is *rodnàya* to you, and then it means that it brings home to you everything that makes your heart beat warmly; whilst to a South-Russian 'a pond,

A very  
Russian  
word for  
affection.

a cherry-garden, and a windmill,' on the face of the step' make a *rodnàya* picture. A poor peasant woman, with large tears standing in her eyes as she hands a pot of milk to the wounded in a passing train, calls them *rodnýie* under her breath, for each of them is as much *rodnòy* to her heart as the one boy who is fighting somewhere far, far away.

The nearest to it in English is 'kindred,' but it is not used in the same homely way for expressing the warmth of the purest love and tenderness.

\* \* \* \* \*

The order  
of words.

I must point out yet another important feature of the Russian language. In English it is necessary to keep the nouns in their exact places, in order not to confuse the object with the subject. 'The English beat the Germans,' is one thing, whilst 'the Germans beat the English' would be quite another! Now, in Russian we purposely group the words in various orders because each order usually gives a different shade to the tone. We are free to avail ourselves of this richness of choice because we can leave the primary distinction between object and subject to the obvious indication of the inflections (one of the nominative, the other of the accusative case). Thus the most enthusiastic phrase to be repeated one day all over Russia, I hope, may be 'Beat the Germans the English!' using the past tense of the exclusively Russian perfective aspect of an infinitive.

In English this sounds rather alarming. Yet

it is the result merely of the lack of inflection (in this case of an accusative for 'the Germans'), and of the trespass on the formal arrangement of words. We can also say 'the English beat the Germans,' of course, but this sounds only formal. For the same reason, another order in wording would sound in English absurd, but does not in Russian, because exact terminations in declension make all the difference: 'The Germans the English beat; Wilhelm the Allies exiled; the Americans the truth showed.' This, if put in the required cases (nomin, and accus.) would mean in Russian a very intensively expressed state of things for which we all of us wish. Again, we can easily say it in the other way: 'The English beat the Germans, the Allies exiled Wilhelm, and the Americans were shown the truth.' But that would not sound nearly so victorious.<sup>1</sup>

The optional way of placing the verbs at the beginning of the sentence makes a great difference to the graphic power of a phrase; it raises it several degrees higher. Our writers do it constantly, as we do it in ordinary speech—as a matter of course, without any preconceived idea of being at all flowery. The music of the Russian speech is as free as a composer when he arranges his little black

<sup>1</sup> Here are the two varieties of the phrase: N'èmtzev Anglichàn'e pobìli; Vilhèlma soyùzn'iki izgnàl'i; Am'erikàntzam pràvdu pokazàl'i. Or (the same meaning but far less victorious): Anglichàn'e pobìl'i N'èmtzev; soyùzn'iki izgnàl'i Vilhèlma; pokazàl'i pràvdu Am'erikàntzam.

words, hooked and tailed, in this or that special succession.

Nothing can give more vivid motion to a descriptive paragraph than placing the verbs at the beginning of each short phrase. Here is one from a story by the young writer, Al'exèy Tolstòy, giving a picture of the breaking-up of the winter in the st'èp' district. I must mention that this author takes Old Russian roots and makes new words of them with the majestic liberty of the beating of an eagle's wings:

'Stirred the winter roads; lay dirty crusts of snow; made naked themselves the hills showing last year's thistles. Bustle the sparrows, coo the honey-voiced doves; scent the walls of the huts perspiring with golden tar; do not rush the officials tinkling the bells of their sledges: soon will the spring floods break away from their leash.'

Here is another nice example from the new pearl in Russian literature, Gòr'ki's *Childhood*:

'Square, broad-chested, he would come in, trim in his golden <sup>1</sup> silk shirt, velvet trousers, and concertina boots.<sup>2</sup> Glittered his hair; shone his gay,

<sup>1</sup> In Russian it is 'goldeny,' like silvery.

<sup>2</sup> Smart top-boots are made in Russia, with a number of horizontal crisp pleats meeting each other under even angles right around and up the upper part of the boot. They are known as *sapogi garmòn'ikoy*, or harmonica-boots = concertina-boots, while the plain top-boots are called *sapogi butylkam'i*, which means bottle-boots.

somewhat squinting, eyes under their thick eyebrows; sparkled his teeth under the black stripe of his young moustache; glowed his silk shirt, softly reflecting the light of the ever-burning lampàdka.<sup>1</sup>

It seems almost incredible to a Russian ear that this order of words could fail to draw a vivid picture as on a film, even in its English garb, but then, perhaps, it does need the additional help which a Russian reader gets from his knowledge of the rest of the scene. In reading Gòr'ki's lines, we also see the dim interior of a solid, warm log hut, the cosy light 'twinkling warmly' before the lampàdki lit in front of the ikon-corner where they are suspended on thin chains, their flickering light dancing on the gilt settings of the ikons. . . . The huge white-washed bread-stove, the wooden benches along the walls, mostly suggestive of a night rest for any casual wanderers. . . .

Few of us belonging to the Intelligenza keep ikons in the rooms of our flats or houses, as was still usual some fifty or sixty years ago; but also very few of us have not known the enjoyable, quiet moments in the nursery where our old nurse keeps her own set of ikons. In those days of wonders, one likes to watch her lighting her lampàdka on a

A reminiscence.

<sup>1</sup> The lamps that are made for the purpose of burning before the ikons are little bowls in glass or china in a metal setting. They are called *lampàdka* or *lampàda*, as distinguished from ordinary *lampa*. There is a special verb applied to them, *t'èplitsa*, which means, approximately, 'twinkle warmly.'

Saturday night. She takes out of a small box several tiny little wicks drawn through weeny little coloured paper stars, lets them float on the oil, and lights one of them. . . . You stand on tiptoe and hold your face so close to it that you smell the sunflower oil and it leaves its impression in your nostrils for ever afterwards. . . . You watch the little paper stars float slowly, slowly, on the oil till they stop. These simple proceedings have the magic power of toning down your exuberant energy, and you gently ask your friend, the nurse, to present you with a gift of several little wicks from her box of treasure-trove (price three kopeks = three farthings). She does so, and you play quietly, placing the precious weeny stars on your blanket in front of your nose—till your eyelids fall as a screen between them and the still more wonderful world you enter.

\*            \*            \*            \*            \*

There are numberless ordinary cases where the verb beginning a phrase comes as a natural demand of the Russian speech while it would sound ridiculous in English. For instance, the whole meaning of the phrase is emphasized in the following examples through having the verbs in the first place:

‘Stilled everything. Sleep the mountains. Sleeps the green sky. Died the air. Am dying I. Love I this willingness of yours, prince! Frightened thou me. (To) Arrest you (is) too early.’



This twist gives a different touch to the phrases than the one which is acquired by the English 'there' placed at the head of a sentence, and could not always be conveyed through the latter. You couldn't add 'there' to any of the above lines taken at random from Turgènev's *Poems in Prose* and from Dostoyèvski. Any part of speech placed first in a Russian sentence draws the reader's attention to it.

For instance, if you want to lay stress on the word 'money,' where you would have to say in English, 'it is money that is wanted,' we simply exchange the places of the two words which make this phrase, instead of adding any more: *Nàdo d'èn'eg* means simply 'money is wanted' (*nàdo* = wanted); but *d'èn'eg nàdo* means: 'It is money that is wanted—not anything else.' If you go with a friend to a shop merely to accompany her, and the assistant asks you what you would like, you would say: *Mn'è n'ichevò n'e nàdo* (I want nothing), the first word being the personal pronoun, thus indicating that you, yourself, want nothing; but if the assistant bothers you and begins to show you goods with the object of tempting you, you would be quite justified in ejaculating: *N'ichevò mn'è n'e nàdo!*—meaning: I don't want anything—as much as to say: Leave me alone! Yet it is only the special succession of the same few words that makes all the difference.

Dmìtri Karamàzov, writing his last letter to the girl whom he had adored, but to whom he became false through his passion for another woman, writes: *Nògi tvojà tzelùyu* = Feet thine (I) kiss. These three words arranged the other way round might be banal, and could be found in many love letters. But placing *Nògi* (feet) at the head of the sentence conveys the idea that Dmìtri would not dare to kiss the woman on her lips, but mentally kisses her feet only; all his self-humiliation is reflected in the order of this wording alone.

\* \* \* \* \*

There are some other reasons which make a perfect translation of many Russian authors an impossible task. There is no wonder that Gògol's genius is very little known and understood abroad! He is *almost untranslatable*; his essentially Russian speech, especially in his passionate, uplifting enthusiasm blended with poetical feeling, is a feature which cannot be conveyed through any other language. He is as exclusively Russian in these as Dostoyèvski and Nekràsov are Russian in suffering, and Shchedrìn in dissecting the evils of Russian social life. Turgènev and Tolstòy, with all their Russian mind, were nevertheless generally human, supernatural, as it were: the first one chiefly an artist, the second a thinker. This is reflected in their speech which is the most translatable and therefore more often translated. But already in Dosto-

yèvski, Chèhov, and Gòr'ki there are those gaps in translations which cannot be filled, or which are sometimes filled with unrecognizable material!<sup>1</sup> whilst at least one-half of the poet Nekràsov, the satirist Shchedrìn, and the colossal sufferer-humorist Gògol' will lose in translation a world of their national beauty and character.

In the midst of that brilliant bitterness with which Gògol' has slated Russia for her shortcomings he has written the most inspired pages that love for country has ever called forth. He has suffered persecution from censorship, misery, and deadly illness, whilst being a nationalist in his genius, a nationalist more honest and more enthusiastic than a writer has ever been.

By the way, it was the *prostòr* that has made some of his pages like living creatures that breathe of Russian passion for immensity. . . .

Just as the Russians themselves do not withhold their enthusiasm for fear of ridicule, so does their language remain fearless and spontaneous, freely using all that can graphically carry depth and power of feeling. There is with us even a second, a more ancient form for the very name of Russia, which we use when we feel particularly in love with her!

A term of  
endear-  
ment for  
'Russia.'

<sup>1</sup> It is a relief to see *whole pages omitted* in the English translation of Gòr'ki's *Childhood*. If 'translated,' they would unavoidably be a painful disappointment to every Russian. It is sufficient to see mistakes here and there in the English text.

The ordinary, less enthusiastic, name is *Rossìya*; but it has come into being only since Peter the Great, who invented it in his zeal to do away with all the past of his country. But in this case he failed (as in some others—more sensible ones!). The original name, *Rus'*, still breathes of something beloved and beautiful, more genuine and more crystal-like than 'Rossiya' does.

The name *Rus'* consists of an *R*, a Russian *u*, and a soft *s*—a very, very soft one. 'Thou, *Rus'*' sounds lovable! . . . *Rus'*, vastness, *tròyka*, speed, *prostòr*, we address them all with a 'thou,' *ty*, for they are such intimate conceptions that they verge on personification almost like the old Olympians were to the Greek.

I feel bound to commit a sacrilege and to "translate" into English some parts of those paragraphs in which Gògol' reflects our passionate love for *prostòr*.

Gògol' on  
*prostòr*.

'*Rus'*, *Rus'*, I can see thee from my beautiful *Far*.<sup>1</sup> . . . All seems poor and scattered and bare about thee. No bold marvels of nature startle one's eye. . . . No wealth of wild roses, ivy-covered rocks, no grapes, no silvery mountains lifting their summits to the skies. All is open and empty. Thy towns are like small dots

<sup>1</sup> This was written in Italy. (We have a beautiful noun, which is akin to the adverb *far*, and which does not exist in English; it means, as it were, the far end of a distance: *dal'*.)

which fail to charm the eye. But what is that unaccountable, mysterious power that draws me to thee? Why doth thy melancholy song, soaring from seas to seas, ring constantly in my ears? What is in that song? What calls me, what seizes my heart? What are these sounds that kiss so painfully and wind themselves around my heart and into my soul? Rus'! What desirest thou from me? Why dost thou gaze at me with eyes full of expectation? In awe I stand before thy vastness while the clouds over thee are heavy with coming rain. . . . What is the prophecy of this unembraceable prostòr? Is it not in its arms that limitless thought should be born, in thy arms, Rus', which embrace all? Is not this the place for thy folk-hero—here, where there is prostòr for him to unfold himself? The power of vastness embraces me and reflects itself in my innermost depth. . . . A-ah! . . . What a sparkling, glorious infinity. . . . Rus'! . . .'

May it be, I wonder, this very sense of size that endows the Russian mind with that fearlessness of individual action which is typical of the Russians?

This reminds me of another set of words which are absolutely untranslatable and yet are so essentially Russian that we simply could not live without them! Our land has given them birth and our self-expression commands our making use of them constantly, daily. They all commence

Concep-  
tions  
without  
which a  
Russian  
could not  
live.

with the syllable of nuance *raz* (раз) whether nouns or verbs. Now that my reader has got, I hope, the conception of *prostòr* clear in his mind, it will be helpful to introduce this other typical Russian idea via the word *razdòlye*: it is almost a synonym to *prostòr*. Its root (*dol'*) comes from *dòl'a*, which means one's part of something; in this case it is one's part in this world that is suggested—and the syllable *raz* distinctly attaches to it the nuance of having that part lavishly spread, thrown out wide and far!

This *raz* is no preposition, no conjunction; it is nothing in itself,<sup>1</sup> and yet it contains a world of meaning. When asked by foreigners 'What is it then?'—all that a Russian usually does is to throw out his arms vigorously to his right and left, to smile as if he suddenly visualized something loveable and to exclaim: 'It is this! . . . Just this! . . .'

I cannot help this primitive manner of explanation either—being the only possible one—and am delighted to see that it does make English people grasp what we mean by it. One of my delightfully impressionable English friends proved this to me by remarking instantly and gaily: 'Then it is not equivalent to the French *élan*, because *élan*

<sup>1</sup> Except when it makes a whole separate word (разъ)—a noun, with a hard sign at the end, which stands for 'one' (besides the proper number *odin*), or for 'once'; it is always used for marking time: *raz-dva!* *raz-dva!* (and not *odin-dva*)—or *raz-dva-tri* (one, two, three)!

is *this!*'—and he made a movement forward, lifting his arms up. Just so! This is an exact illustration of the difference. If you want to *feel* the meaning of the nuance *raz*—vigorously throw your arms out horizontally, as wide as you can! Now attach this feeling of *raz* to the *conception of space* as if there were, say, prairies all around you—and you get the synonym to *prostòr*: *razdòlye*. It is a definition of an abstract idea.

Then attach it to the idea of—No! Here I am caught again because you haven't got that idea either, so I must explain its Russian meaning. The root *mah* suggests a vigorous physical movement of one's arms—not a waving like the gentle waving with one's wrist, which is practised in England from babyhood, but one broad gesture, a swing. Now try to attach the nuance of the *raz* to the meaning of the *mah*—and you get the *razmàh* without which no Russian could find a way for expressing another beloved abstract conception. *Razmàh* of one's spiritual power is a fine thing, and it comes into Russian prose, poetry and ordinary speech constantly.

*Razsv'èt* means the morning dawn, the break of day; and this will perhaps make things clearer to my reader if I tell him that *sv'et* means light: thus the word conveys a picture of the 'light throwing itself out.'

There is no wonder that the word *razgùl* does

not exist in English: its second syllable, the root *gul*, refers to 'walking out' (*gul'ànye* = a walk, an outing, an entertainment out of doors; *gul'àt'* = to have a walk); well, with the nuance of *raz* attached to it, it conveys such a kind of 'outing' as is not tolerated in England! *Razgùl* does not imply a certain limited time given up to a casual debauch, but one's whole mode of life saturated with it. An excellent illustration is Dmìtri Karàmàzov: *his* life was all of it a *razgùl*.

In the form of a verb, *razgul'àtsa*, it is much milder and carries the idea of a wholehearted sparkling gaiety by which a Russian is swept away whenever it inflames him.

The *raz* attached to such verbs as to speak, to make merry, to walk, to sleep, conveys the idea expressed in English by 'To let oneself go': if you let yourself go in speaking, merry-making, walking, or sleeping to such an extent that it becomes difficult to prevent you from going on with it—you fall under the Russian definitions *razgovòritsa*, *razv'es'elìtsa*, *razoytìs'*, *razospàtsa*, etc. There are dozens of them. One can do anything to the extent of *raz*-doing it! Only, English people seldom allow themselves such luxuries, so there exist no definitions for them.

An important digression.

I must take my chance on this occasion to make an important digression. I am bound to fire some shots at 'The English' throughout this book—



due to the lack of definitions in the English language, corresponding to the blank spaces in English life. With us, instead of those blank spaces, are the most breezy, passionate, natural, warm, care-sive things (and words for them). But I always remember the remark of a young Russian fellow who had received his school and university education in England:

‘Take care, don’t mix them all up together: the present younger generation in England has mostly got the gift of spontaneity and *wlechèniye*’ (we were speaking in Russian)—‘They are not afraid of showing what they really feel. They hate the old stodginess, and dryness, and artificial reserve of the Victorian era.’

Now, asking my reader to remember this too, I feel justified in continuing my investigations in our two languages: after all, it is the younger English generation that has got the new sap—resembling the Russian one—flowing through it, but not the English language yet.

They say that a Dutch tourist, after having stayed in Russia for some sime, was asked by his host how he liked our country.

‘I like it very much,’ said the Dutchman. ‘The only thing which strikes me is—why do you throw out your arms so often? One does not see this gesture in our land at all. We don’t do it.’

‘I should like to know how could you possibly

do it over there?'—the Russian remarked with a humorous smile.

To the sense of size should be added the sense of motion. . . . True, a few years ago Russia had been thrown by force of reaction into a state of *marasme*. There was almost a stagnant standstill in the one-time keenness for social interests. Russian society (compared to the one in the beginning of the century) seemed to be dozing off, tired to the verge of indifference with regard to our place in the world in the future. . . . But here comes the war, and all is awake and throbbing with genuine, intense love: for homeland, to be freed from the at last realized German yoke, for the people represented by the soldàtik, that wonderful 'grey hero' (modest hero), for the prostòr of Russia that gives the chance to the unsophisticated heroism of old to 'unfold' itself (*razvernùtsa*) again for a great cause. . . . And, instinctively, one's mind returns to Gògol': who but he, in the thirties of the last century, spoke about Russia in those allegorical pages which everyone of us has learned almost by heart for their beauty, but to which no one has ever attached any prophetic meaning? If anything, one felt somewhat ashamed of those lines where he boasts of Russia with the daring frankness of a genius! I have already mentioned that self-advertising is not a Russian feature; and in our private life it has always been

sufficient for any ordinary person to express anything approaching Gògol's admiration for Russia to be suspected of chauvinism. The now almost extinct, but formerly aggressive, 'Union of True Russians,' has taught us to be over-conscientious, and we thought it almost a crime against our own country to express our love for her openly.

But this is changing now! And, speaking here chiefly of the Russians *as reflected in their language*, I cannot omit those pearls in the realm of that language which have become the expression of the idea growing nowadays in many European minds (with the exception of those of German origin!) . . . I have never seen a translation of the pages I am thinking of, and I would not follow one if I had met one. I stand breathless before my task, like every Russian would. And yet I must try and 'translate' these pages as I did those above—not into classical English, no!—but keeping to the original as literally as possible: because my purpose is to try and show to a literally inclined reader *how* the mind of a Russian genius works (if this can be called 'work'), what are its national ways of self-expression.

These inspired pages are addressed to a *tròyka*, Tròyka. which Gògol' compares, in his heart, to Russia herself. Perhaps it would be better to explain to some of my readers what a *tròyka* means: it is the national Russian team, three horses abreast.

The middle one is a powerful 'trotter' who steadily keeps to his action, while the two horses at his sides are trained to bend their necks away from him, so that the persons in the vehicle (which may be of any kind, just as any kind of vehicle may be drawn by horses driven tandem) can see their profiles all the time. The part of these two *prist'ajnijia* ('attached ones') is not the pulling itself; they are attached very lightly; their business in forming two-thirds of a *tròyka* is the so-called playing: the element of beauty, the graceful, flying motion, the elegance, the gaiety. . . . Try to imagine the musical chord of the little bells tinkling under the *dugà* (bent wood high over the neck of the middle horse), the power of the broad-chested trotter (*korennoy*), throwing his legs out far, in that 'rare' Russian trot, try to imagine the vitality and beauty, and especially the elegant, complex rhythm of the *tròyka* flying along the broad roads in the open country and down every hill. . . .

'Eh, *Tròyka!* *Tròyka-the-bird!* Who has invented thee? Thou must have been born with a quick-thinking people, in that land which means no joke, but which has flung itself out,<sup>1</sup> vast and smooth, half over the world. . . . Go, count the mile-stones till they dance in your eyes! It would seem there is nothing complicated about thee,

<sup>1</sup> The Russian verb is *razm'etnùlas'*. The adverb following it (*ровнемъ-гладнемъ*) is absolutely unattainable in English.

tròyka: just a few strokes of the axe and chisel in the hands of a quick peasant—and there thou art! No German leggings about the driver—just beard and gloves—and the devil knows what he is sitting on! But there he leans forward, and swings his knut, and starts his song—and the steeds are like a hurricane, the spokes in the wheels are one smooth circle, and the road gives a shudder, and an involuntary shout escapes the startled passer-by. . . . And there she flies, she flies—the tròyka! Already one but sees in the distance something swirling and dust eddying in the air.

‘Art thou not, Rus’, flying like a lightning-swift tròyka, too? The road is a whirlwind of dust under thee, the bridges tremble, and all remains behind. . . . What is this awe-inspiring motion, like a bolt thrown down from the skies? What unknown power is there in these unseen horses? . . . Eh, horses, horses! What horses! . . . Is there a storm hidden in your manes? Is every little vein of yours throbbing with responsiveness? . . . There comes the song you know—and—hardly touching the ground with your hoofs—you are like arrows flying through the air. . . .

‘And there she soars, inspired by God! . . . Rus’, whither fliest thou? Give thine answer! . . . There is no answer. Bewitchingly goes the little bell, the air torn into fragments rings in your ears and becomes wind. . . . All flies by and remains

behind. . . . And, looking askance, other peoples and countries stand aside and give way to thee. . . .’

This sounds awful! (I don’t mean Gògol’s premature vision, but his speech in the English attire.) It is robbed of all its winding, throbbing beauty. It is like a photograph as compared to the photographed landscape itself: no colours, no breeze, no vivifying warmth! only the skeleton. Because the genuine colours and breeze and warmth of the philosophy and of the syntax itself of the Russian speech reaching their climax in these pages have no equivalents whatever.

Perhaps this statement will become clearer if I say that one can easily translate this *English* Gògol’ back into the Russian, but—if one closely follows the English ‘original’—it will not be the *Russian* Gògol’! Very far from the genuine one indeed. Because there are many ways to say a fine Russian sentence within the limits of a given idea, but giving it each time different half-shades, whilst there will be but one certain correct way to say that sentence in English, or in any other language.<sup>1</sup> The very exclamation by which Gògol’ hails Russia as represented by tròyka (and which

<sup>1</sup> Since these lines were written I have made a special study of the English translations of the *Dead Souls* and *Inspector General* on their republication; and I find my suppositions fully realized. Gògol’s *quiet* humour in *Dead Souls* can more or less find its expression in using a *rich* English style (with the exception, of course, of the killing names he gives

is usually wrongly spelt in English with a *k*—*Ekh*) always carries with us a certain attitude in itself; in ejaculating Эхъ != *Eh!* we mean: ‘Here is a thing (or situation) about which one could say a lot! . . . But I am unable to. . .’ There is a touch of longing in it.

I cannot omit at this convenient occasion that putting the artificial *kh* for a Russian *h* not only makes this word look like a caricature and takes away its long sound, but it even alters its meaning: because there is *another* exclamation, Экъ !—consisting of the same deep *e* and a *k* (in the place of an *h*), but it conveys quite a different atmosphere: it carries astonishment and reproach with it and stands for the quintessence of, ‘Just look at it! Did you ever!’ Thus, transliterating both Эхъ and Экъ as *ekh*, the translators kill the meaning of both—substituting for it something like an old man’s cough.

\* \* \* \* \*

Now, my patient or impatient reader, allow me to dwell for a moment on the idea itself of these lines of Gògol’s, leaving form alone.

The possibility of fulfilment of Gògol’s vision.

to his characters, in place of which we see blank spaces or meaningless substitutes, to which we shall return later); but as a passionate lover of his country, he will remain untranslatable for ever. The unknown translator of *Dead Souls* must excuse my saying that he has approached the original beauty of the Tròyka-pages no nearer than I have myself. We are both equally tied by the entire absence of an equivalent mode of speech in English.

This idea should not frighten any Englishman. The fear one still meets amongst the British public with regard to Russia as the foe to be fought next is due only to the lack of thorough acquaintance with the country. I have mentioned already that the educated Russians have always expected the light to come to them from the West. An obvious proof of this was the encouragement, both private and official, but always spontaneous, with which the German colonist and the German accurate official used to be met all over the Russian land. It was only the peasantry and the working classes that permitted themselves the attitude of frank, although inactive and humorous distrust, whilst the most advanced *Intelligentziya* was naïvely trying her best to sow the Western Culture on the Russian soil—wherever the seeds could be got from. Even our revolutionaries were frequently too Western in their whole-hearted efforts to raise our village population from its ‘un-European’ darkness. The war has brought the sudden revelation that there exists Western culture *and* Western culture! And England should rest assured that now our educated society will be most keen and conscientious to rectify its mistake. The psychological attitude from the very beginning of the struggle has acquired a serious, steady form. There is no hysteria, no rushing and dashing about it; none, even, of the old nonchalance expressed



in the narrowly-patriotic saying: 'We can bury the foe under our caps!' = *Shàpkami zakidàyem!* Every person and every written page that now comes from Russia is full of something new. The nation is awakening to the consciousness of her serious, quiet power. She will presently find herself within herself. In that new coming era there will be room enough for Western influence and for Western aspirations only inasmuch as these will entirely correspond with the Slavonic ones. The element with which will probably rest the approaching shaping of Russia will be a perfectly new one: radical nationalism. Because, formerly our nationalists were the reactionaries, and our radicals were thus opposed to them voluntarily and involuntarily. But the new type of a true Russian culturist will come forward in masses, and will present the accounts to all debtors. These will have to be traced everywhere.

The new  
idea of  
national-  
ism.

There is room for hoping that, next, Russia will make her greatest stride ahead.

No danger  
for Eng-  
land.

Therefore England should not for a moment doubt the good of helping her: she is helping the new Russia, that Russia which is becoming conscious of all that is best in her, and who means to foster that best. One ingredient of the latter is love for peace. And as long as there is plenty of prostòr for us to unfold ourselves (*razvernùtsa*) physically and spiritually in our immense land,

there is no vestige of danger for anyone. Our Shchedrin, satirist as he was, said: 'Prostòr calls forth a limitless, unconquerable thirst for love.' Aggressiveness has never been a feature of the Slavs, and one could not repeat this too much to those who hesitate: Russia will now find means to develop within herself; she will find ample room, ample raw material, and ample spiritual power to do so without troubling anyone.

\* \* \* \* \*

A typical  
Russian  
word for  
quick wit.

In returning to the Russian language I would like to mention now a typical word of a less grave nature than the preceding pages. It is a noun, sounding, approximately, *sm'òtka*; it means the capacity of thinking very quickly on the spur of the moment, or, initiative plus speed. For instance, *sm'òtka* is priceless in this war against the Germans to upset their splendidly-planned theories. It has been proved now that they are helpless before the Unexpected. It blinds them. Here is an example of *sm'òtka*.

Three Russian infantry soldiers managed to penetrate in their reconnaissance expedition so far that they suddenly found themselves right amongst the enemy: there they were, in a large field, almost enclosed by Germans within earshot. Of course, the first thing they did on realizing this circumstance was to scratch the back of their heads (no Russian in perplexity can do without this ges-

ture!); after which, obedient to Fate, they remarked quietly that 'their hour has evidently come.' At that moment there came a noise of a propeller, and a German aeroplane, gracefully and in full confidence, landed quite near them.

'Look here, brothers,' said one of the soldàtiki, smiling, 'we are lost all the same, so let us try a joke. Come along and take them prisoners.' Said—done!—as they say in Russian.<sup>1</sup> Up walk the three fellows to the aeroplane, and approach face to face the slightly-surprised airman and his pilot, before these have time to stretch their limbs. A bullet in the temple finishes the pilot on the spot, after which the soldàtiki quietly but clearly explain to the officer, by means of gesticulation, that he is to pull the machine along the field. That German officer had certainly no atom of sm'òtka in him, for he obediently did so; partly screened by the aeroplane the three men led their prey through the perilously narrow space between the lines of the enemy to the Russian lines, whilst the Germans must have been looking on with that same slow-working surprise (the opposite to sm'òtka!) at that airman of theirs, who was steadily pushing his machine towards the Russian side!

Another case of sm'òtka is no less historical, though peaceful. When Catherine II. was erect-

<sup>1</sup> Сказано—сдѣлано!

ing the monument to Peter the Great, she was displeased with the solid rock of granite which had been brought as a foundation for it, with immense difficulties, from Finland.

‘I will not have it,’ she said, glancing at it from her carriage. ‘It is ugly in shape.’

This time it was many men in the enormous crowd in the vast Winter Square who scratched their heads: To take the huge thing away? After all the trouble . . . ?

Several courtiers dared to approach the Empress, explaining that the task of removing the rock would be as enormous as fetching it.

‘Dig out a hole close by and push it down!’ came a voice from the crowd.

The peasant was richly rewarded for his *sm’òtka*; and the granite rock, which did not pass the inspection of an artistic taste, lies buried close to the fine monument.

Of course, that capacity for quick-thought takes at times comical forms. A Russian general who was very keen on broadening the outlook of his men, told me about his experience at the Soldiers’ School of which he was in command when a young officer of nineteen. The chief characteristic of his men—all of them country fellows—was that they were never given to doubt or hesitation: their brains worked as fast as possible, in some direction or other! One day the general in command

of the district came to inspect the school at work. Taking some pride in the advanced nature of his teaching, the youthful ardent officer suggested to his chief that he might put his pupils some questions in ancient history.

‘ Oh, indeed ? ’—Pleasantly surprised, the general addressed one of the keen-looking fellows: ‘ Dost thou know anything about Socrates ? ’

‘ Yes, sir ! ’

‘ Well ? What about him ? ’

‘ He is the left forward horse in the second troyka with the sixth gun in the third battery who wants shoeing, sir ! ’ came as quick as lightning.

The young scholar forgot for the moment who Socrates was, but he would not be non-plussed, and quickly thought of the ‘ Socrates ’ of his battery called so by the men in honour of the interesting lessons.

\* \* \* \* \*

There are some rather interesting points about the conceptions concerning man and marriage. In the olden days man was called *muj*, and the same word stood for husband. Nowadays *muj* means husband only, whilst the new word defining man has grown out of the same root through the addition of the sound *chìna*: *mujchìna*. This addition is not meaningless; already, in those days when *muj* meant man, the word *chin* meant rank: thus

‘ Man,’  
‘ woman,’  
and ‘ marriage.’

the newer word, *mujchîna*, means really a creature having the rank of a man.

Similar promotion has been granted to woman. The old word *jenà* meant both woman and wife, whereas now *jenà* means wife only, and the newer word *jènshchina* has come into being for defining woman—a creature having the rank of a woman!

The English expression 'to marry' is strictly divided in Russian according to facts. Speaking about a girl who is going to marry we say *onà vyhòdit zàmuj*; note the last two-syllabled word, which means 'behind man,' and you will get the original meaning: 'she is going out, or leaving her parental home, to place herself behind a man'; isn't this an exact definition of what marriage meant for a girl even not so very long ago? Whilst speaking of a man about to wed, we say *on jènitsa*—which means, as it were, 'he be-wifes himself.' This *façon de parler* indicates much more independence in comparison with the meaning of marriage for a girl: it is just the same grammatical form as 'soaping oneself' (*mýlitsa*) or 'steaming oneself' in a bath-house (*pàritsa*)!

The words *fiancé* and *fiancée* are with us defined thus: *jenîh* stands for the man who obviously has involved himself in some way with a *jenà* (wife), as the stem of the word clearly indicates; whereas the word for *fiancée* is derived from the Old Slavonic 'not know' (*n'e v'èdat*; *n'ev'èsta*),

which suggests the state of mind of a young girl who is about to be married. Both frank and poetic.

To return to the old word *chin* (rank): besides the definitions for man and woman it has formed a nucleus for rather a curious set of conceptions. Obviously, in times of yore, *chin* conveyed the idea of a dignified, imposing personality, because the old word *bezchinstvo* meant every scandalous or rowdy scene: its meaning is quite plain, as its first syllable, *bez*, stands for 'without'; thus things 'without *chin*' were things deprived of dignity, as it were—deprived of the atmosphere which should go with rank. It is a word which is still often applied to disorderly crowds or drunken brawls.

Again, since Peter the Great's effort at putting Russia in order there has appeared the word *chinòvnik*, deliberately created from the same root; that is to say, a man of a certain rank in Government service, as opposed to a private individual. Unfortunately, the word *chinòvnik* soon acquired the additional characteristic of callousness and greediness, and thus turned into a distinct definition of a type opposed to all big-hearted, generous altruistic work for the people. There exist Memoirs of a French aristocrat who visited Russia in the times of Alexander III.; in them he wrote:

'Chin,'  
'chinov-  
nik,' and  
Peter the  
Great.

‘ Il y a en Russie un espèce de canaille qu’on appelle chinovnik.’

Apropos of the word chinòvnik, one’s thoughts involuntarily approach the question which the Russians are often asked in this country: ‘ How is it that your charming nation produces such horrible creatures as your bureaucrats ?’

This problem has always been instinctively felt even in Russia herself, although we do not actually call ‘ charming ’ everyone who is not a chinòvnik (bureaucrat). Looking backwards now, at this hour of re-valuations, one can attempt an historical solution of the question. Ever since Peter the Great undertook the enlightening of Old Russia by means of wholesale importation of Germans into the land, there began a continuous inoculation of utterly un-Russian aspirations, alongside with the technical machinery of State life. The Tsars and Tsaritsas after Peter had a great deal of German blood and education in them. They and their helpers took great care to fill up all the ruling Russian institutions with Germans. The only exception was Catherine II., who did not exclude Russians as a matter of principle. Well, is it not logical to suppose that, with the adaptability and flexibility of the Russian nature, those of the Russians who did form the minor proportion of the officialdom, were gradually influenced and saturated with a hitherto unknown



spiritual narrowness and dryness? Would they not, having the pompousness and greediness grafted on to them from generation to generation, gradually degenerate into that type which indeed stands apart from the rest of the Russian nation—and which even now is trying to stop the wheels of a national spiritual upheaval? Now it seems to be a likely conclusion that Peter the Great, however wise his eventual ideals were, has made the usual mistake of a self-made man (which he was) in using without discrimination those means on a large scale which impressed him most.

‘Russia is large and abundant, but there is no order in her.’ These words are attributed in the earliest Russian legend to the North Russians, who went (about the eighth century) to seek for rulers abroad and brought with them three wandering warriors from Scandinavia. Nevertheless, no order resulted from it, and Peter the Great, in trying to introduce it himself, almost repeated the mistake of the aboriginal Russians! Worse still, he overdid it. If he could return again, he would certainly rise to the full height of his seven odd feet, and deliberately apply to the German backs his famous Russian *dubinka* (“the dear cudgel”), which he invariably carried about with him two centuries ago in his busy work of Germanizing the Russians!

Such are the jokes of the old dame History.

\* \* \* \* \*

An example  
of trans-  
ference of  
ideas.

The Russians find that toothache is different from all other pains, and they indicate this difference by a special word which means the pain of a recurrent, grinding nature, entirely different from the pain of a burn or a cut. The verb indicating that sort of pain consists of three letters: first, *n*; then the exclusively Russian hard vowel which has got to be defined in some way or other, and for which the English *y* has been adopted; and a soft *t*: *nyt'*. The conception of toothache conveyed by this verb includes a subtle idea of a monotonous, incessant sound. . . . Well, the Russian mind has transferred this word to indicate those persons who possess the unfortunate capacity for getting on your nerves by constantly airing their own grievances as well as finding that 'the times are out of joint' altogether. For instance, if a friend visits you evening after evening and goes on till midnight with the same old grumbings and complaints, you exclaim at last, if you are Russian: 'Stop your *nyt*-ing!' (*Da bros't'e vy nyt'!*).

We make this little phrase very intense without possessing the auxiliary verb *do*. One of the numerous ways of intensifying the meaning of any sentence consists in applying the conjunction *yes* (*da*) in *one of its various shades*: thus the above exclamation literally runs in Russian, 'Da stop you *nyt'*!' (We need no preposition *to* before our

infinitives.) Thus being addressed, the most annoying melancholic will mostly become silent.

Recently, on hearing this, a bright English girl asked: 'But isn't silence the normal state of melancholics?' This remark brought home to me an additional point of difference in national individuality. A Russian melancholic—even a melancholic!—is apt to go on pouring his melancholy out, so to speak; and that is just what is called 'nyt'-ing (*nytyò*). Undoubtedly the English variety of a melancholic is more attractive. Here the tendency of locking up one's thoughts and feelings from other people certainly greatly adds to their comfort.

There is one more Russian word of the same class which makes every good translator stop short: it is *toskà*. They usually end by giving for it the English words depression or despondency—but it is not the same thing. *Toskà* is a very poetical term, used throughout the folk-lore; and in its form of a verb, *toskovàt'*, it is equally popular. We even apply this verb speaking separately of our thought, heart, or blood: for instance: My heart *toskùyet*; my thought *toskùyet*; my blood *toskùyet*.

A very  
Russian  
concep-  
tion.

But the most popular way is to use it quite alone. Therefore the English 'yearning,' as well as 'depression,' 'dejection,' 'distress,' and 'despondency,' cannot compete with the independent power of the

toskà, either. If a chum walks gloomily into your study, throws himself on to your couch, and remains motionless, his eyebrows and lips alone expressive of pain, and you ask (if you are not chùtki enough!): 'What's the matter?' he is sure to say the one word: 'Toskà!' Then you will remember that he had lost someone he loved, or simply that lately the man 'couldn't find a place for himself on earth.' Or you may overlook, by chance, a young girl painfully clasping her arms in some lonely wood or garden, and overhear her repeating to herself the only word, 'Toskà, toskà!' and you will know what she feels like. . . . 'Eh, toskà has gnawed me up!' = *Eh, toskà zayèla!*—is a very Russian expression; and none of the suggested English words can be used with that same independence and all-explaining power. Such English expressions as getting a hump, or being in the blues, don't let the tragic and poetical element of the situation appear, thus being no good either. Could the English mind be so severe as not to permit any tragedy or poetry into the feelings of a person who is pining away with the longing for his homeland, or his beloved one, or for the spring and sunshine? 'Homesick' is no good either, as it serves one purpose only; 'longing' requires a definition of what one is longing for, whilst the Russians are apt to experience the toskà without any strictly defined cause; 'yearning' cannot stand as an

independent, all-explaining ejaculation. We often are overtaken by *toskà* under circumstances when a well-balanced Englishman would simply refresh himself by giving way to a strong expression. Therefore, perhaps, the hump, the spike, etc., are just the right sort of definitions—for the English. But even then, they are labelled by the literati as slang and are not admitted into high-class literature, whereas *toskà* is a classical Russian word. There is not one Russian poet who wouldn't have used it in a number of his works!

The Russian word for 'weary' (*tomit'*) has a form of an active verb with us which suggests the idea of exhaustion, like that caused by a long waiting for something, or by anxiety, or even by the 'singing' of a solitary gnat in your bedroom in the heat of a summer night. But a Russian mind finds a poetic element even in weariness. A modern poet, Feodor Sologùb, amongst a quantity of very complicated matter, drops a few very simple little triolets which speak direct to every Russian heart. They are exactly the kind which draws for every lover of the north a *rodnàya* picture:

' My heart doth leap with former joy:  
North once more, and rain once more!  
Once more the moss is thin and tender.  
Once more the sadness that gives joy,  
And weariness that is so sweet,  
And once again the dreamy woods.  
Beloved North! Beloved rain!'

The 'sad-  
ness that  
gives joy.'

' The moss is sighing under foot,  
 The silver birches tremble sweetly,  
 The forest hid his face in fog—  
 There is but forest, moss and fog,  
 A song that's moan, a word that's sigh,  
 Mirage of earth and dark of sky. . . .  
 Ye loved forest, tender moss,  
 Ye silver birches trembling sweetly !'

I had to use the adjectives 'loved' and 'be-  
 loved,' as being nearer to the original *mily* than  
 the ordinarily given translation 'dear.' *Mily* has  
 more meaning in it: it indicates not only your  
 attitude towards someone or something, but also  
 that he (or she, or it) is nice in himself—although  
 it has nothing to do with the idea of value, as  
 'dear' (*drcrogòy*) has. One applies this term to a  
 nice person, or a nice deed, whereas one does not  
 say in Russian, 'a dear person.' At the same time  
 it is a word which one wants to whisper hundreds  
 of times into the ear of the loved one.

The lines above, in which the North is called  
 'mily,' and the rain too, only show what a power  
 of loving there is granted to the Slav. Nature's  
 weariness itself fills him with 'sadness that gives  
 joy,' and he is one with her in whatever mood she  
 is: for doesn't she suggest that she too enjoys in  
 a special kind of way her autumn with its trist-  
 ful, grey, poor-looking, monotonous attire? . . . A  
 Russian seldom gets the hump through bad weather.  
 If he is responsive he attunes himself to it without  
 getting upset.

This attitude of responsiveness, of oneness with Nature's moods, is reflected in a number of poems by various authors. Some clumsy English, but one closely interpreting the Russian flow of thoughts may be, perhaps, allowed here for the sake of pointing out this very Russian feature of which a little has been already shown in the autumnal triolets. The Russians are not contented with flowers for table-decorations (in fact, there is no such item in the Russian life), not even with a nice little flower garden (we hardly do any gardening for ourselves, which is a great pity). It is again the atmosphere of *prostòr*, a mood on a large scale that draws them. . . . The beautiful poet, Al'exèy Tolstòy, amongst many others, expresses it for us:

The oneness with Nature.

'The sea is not foaming, the waves do not splash,  
No stir in the fir-trees' dark branches.  
Reflecting the world in itself as a glass  
Pellucid the sea lies quiescent.

'I'm sitting on a rock. O'er me fleecy clouds  
Hang motionless high in the azure. . . .  
My soul is at peace with itself and profound—  
The still sea and I are at one.'

'Breaking and splashing the wave throws its tear-drops of salt in my eyelids.

Spellbound I sit on a rock while new courage flows into my spirit.

Endlessly forwards and backwards the surges are beating my stronghold.

Foam on their crests rolling snow-white and gleaming.

'Whom shall I challenge to fight, mighty sea?  
On whom shall I try coming power?

My heart now has learned the beauty of life,  
 Oh, waves, ye have washed out sorrow !  
 Your roar and your splash have awakened my soul—  
 The turmoil and I are at one.'

The folk-lore expresses this strong bond with Nature in a slightly different, but, if anything, still more poetic way. Numbers of folk-songs begin with a statement about some apparition of Nature and then simply pass on to the corresponding mood of the singer, placing the two as obvious parallels. For instance:

' Why growest thou misty, lucid dawn, now covering earth with dew ?  
 Why growest thou pensive, stately girl, tears rising to thine eyes ?'

Or:

' The green blade of grass was growing in the field.  
 But they have cut me down and have laid me to dry in the sun.

Oh, thou bitter, bitter lot of mine !'

Or:

' The white fog is rolling heavily over the lake,  
 Grief and *toskà* have overpowered the young fellow,' etc.

All Russian poets follow this national manner of self-expressing as a matter of course. But the quaintest of such parallels comes in one of the latest short poems by Igor' S'ev'er'anin:

" A gnat is circling above the duck-weed of a pool, fascinated and unable to penetrate it.  
 I cannot take my eyes off thine, unable to penetrate their meaning."

\* \* \* \* \*



I hear our postman, the man I mentioned before (see p. 11), knock at the door as I am writing this. . . . I wonder what *he* would think of such things ? !

Looking  
backward.

\* \* \* \* \*

To return to the point of the 'lack' of spiritual fire with the Russians: one must be just, and say that only our exacting poets, upset by the sight of a few men in the state of an objectless *toskà*, could generalize this accusation !

Chèhov, the profound national psychologist, said in the words of one of his everyday heroes:

' . . . If a Russian does not believe in God it means that he believes in something else, and this he does not inactively, not like a German doctor of philosophy, but so that every one of his beliefs makes a *dugà* of him' (which means that each leading ideal bends or sways his every action). . . . 'As a small boy I was told that soup was the main thing in life, and I stuffed myself with it to the state of stupefaction ! When a schoolboy I devoured books and believed in every one of them. I ran away to America and lured other boys into joining me. . . . Then came Science. . . . Revelation ! I thought that I had grasped the solution of existence from its first pages ! I gave myself up to Science passionately, headlong, as one gives oneself up to a beloved woman. Afterwards I

A main-  
spring of  
the  
Russian  
character.

found out that the beginning of each science does this with every man. . . . I went 'back to the land' and 'to the people' . . . I toiled with the *burlaki*' on the Volga. . . . I came to love the Russian folk, their speech, their creative spirit—I loved them to the verge of suffering. . . . Then came the abdication of property. . . . Then the non-resistance to evil. . . .'

The man does not say what is his worship at the moment of his telling the story of his life to the author, but the latter easily finds out that his latest faith is—the faith in Woman. These lines are typical of the Russians, very typical indeed.

Difference  
between  
the English  
and the  
Russian  
concep-  
tions  
of belief.

Here I want to point out that there exists in Russian only one word for the two English ones 'belief' and 'faith.' This is a case where, apparently, Russian is poorer than English, but I think that it has its explanation. The English believe with their minds and have faith with their hearts. But the much more emotional Russian temperament is satisfied with what comes from the heart, often without subjecting it to the criticism of the intellect. Now, in English, 'belief' implies entirely an intellectual attitude, and therefore gives a touch to this conception which is strange to a Russian mind. Therefore, again, Chèhov's sketch of a typical 'believer' (briefly given above) shows the most national Slavonic feature of putting one's

*heart* and *soul* into whatever one believes to be right.

Believing in the sense of thinking only is inconceivable to him. That is why religious faith with the Russians is either passionate to the degree of an almost aboriginal fatalism, or it is absent altogether.

But then, we have two words for truth: *pravda* Two words for 'truth.' implies truth as applied to facts themselves, whereas *istina* rather expresses the existence of truth as of an abstract idea. For instance, the English for Pontius Pilate's query, 'What is Truth?' is given in Russian not by means of the word *pravda*, but runs, 'What is *istina*?'

In brief, it is *istina* who inhabits the bottom of the well, and not *pravda*. Therefore, the English expression, 'God's Truth' runs in Russian *istin-naya pravda*, the first of the nouns being turned into an adjective; but one could not possibly say it the other way round (*pravdivaya istina*) no more than you would say 'truthful God.'<sup>1</sup>

\* \* \* \* \*

My mind wanders to one more definition which 'Behind-the-soul'-ness. is lovable to a Russian mind, but which would be

<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Edward Garnett, whose translations approach the Russian originals nearer than any one else's, translates *istina* now 'truth,' now 'justice'—and it is not her fault that the subtle, deep distinction between these English words and the *istina* cannot be conveyed.

ridiculous in translation because the conception itself is strange to the English. The word means 'one behind the soul' (*zadushèvny*)—or a quality which dwells in the deepest recesses of one's spirit. Thus, the man who is endowed with 'behind-the-soul'-ness is very deep and sympathetic, and at the same time very straightforward, so that one feels that one can talk to such a man as one would talk to oneself. A beautiful example of this nature is 'The Stranger' in Mr. Jerome K. Jerome's *Passing of the Third Floor Back*. A conversation in itself between fellow-thinkers can be a 'behind-the-soul' one; also a voice, or a manner of reciting and of acting. The last two *must* be of the 'behind-the-soul' quality to reach a Russian listener's heart. That is why, again, Sir Forbes Robertson's manner of speaking in itself appeals to us, whilst the one of the late Sir Henry Irving seemed to us painfully artificial in its almost intoned monotony.

We call our best-beloved friend a 'behind-the-soul' one. . . .

But I understand that the best friends amongst the English people seldom like to share between them what is 'behind their souls,' so there is no wonder that the English speech lacks the described definition.

Yet Mr. Garstin very sympathetically describes, in his little book *The Friendly Russia*, how often we make thorough acquaintance in the course of

the first conversation with a stranger who appeals to us, telling and asking each other with equal straightforwardness dozens of things of a personal nature. The lovable personalities of Dostoyèvski's Idiot and Al'osha are the best illustrations of a behind-the-soul nature, and I am glad to notice that they appeal to the most interesting and educated type of the English people. The General gladly calls the Idiot 'a behind-the-soul' man in the course of their first meeting, when the young man, not at all reluctant, tells him of his cherished principles. (Mr. Jerome's Stranger doesn't—but he is an English variety!)

This reminds me of a case in this country when a young English fellow made the whole of a dainty party at dinner roar with laughter simply by telling them how a casual Irish fellow-traveller told him on the route between Liverpool and Manchester how many children he had, what sort of children they were, how splendid his wife was, how much he made of his farm and what were the items of that particular year, what he thought of life in general, etc. I must say that, although the vital, outspoken Irishman was somewhat simple as compared to the 'Idiot' or Al'osha, my Russian sympathies on that occasion were entirely with him who was neither shy of the society youngster, nor so proud as to keep to himself what was to him the whole meaning of existence, when there was a chance of conversa-

tion with a human soul instead of an alien silence in the course of a whole hour.

The soul has altogether a prominent place in a Russian conversation. It is one of our terms as a friendly form of address (*dushà moyà*). Also, if anything suits our tastes and principles exceptionally well, we say that it is *po dushè*—i.e., ‘alongside our soul’; whereas everything that is ‘against the grain’ in English is *ne po dushè*, ‘not alongside our soul’ in Russian.

Some Russian sayings.

The above-mentioned Irishman was just the opposite type of a man to the one which is suggested by the graphic Russian saying *s'eb'è na um'è*: it gives the idea of a miniature of Mr. So-and-So sitting on the edge of the actual Mr. So-and-So's brain, listening to it attentively, and granting or not granting egress to the teeming thoughts. . . .

Many sayings are fine in that rich suggestiveness. One of them I heard recently from a Russian who applied it to the manners of German warfare: ‘If not by washing, then by mangling!’ Rather good is the one stating that ‘There is enough stupidity to be got in the world to go round for all sage.’<sup>1</sup>

Most graphic is the saying used by the peasantry to indicate a state of absolute safety: to convey its meaning I must first say that our peasants and workmen very often keep their money, or a thick slice of bread (*krayùha*) for the next meal, or alto-

<sup>1</sup> See list of Russian words and phrases. p 224

gether something of value, next to their skin, under their shirt. This place of safety is called 'za pàzuhoy,' which, in itself, is untranslatable. Well, then, when anyone finds himself in a state where there is no grief or worry, one says about him: 'He is like *za pàzuhoy* with the Christ!'—*i.e.*, as if Christ kept him next to His skin! . . .

\* \* \* \* \*

We have no word for 'slang'; we simply say 'the speech of the labourers,' 'the speech of peasants,' 'of fishermen,' 'of tramps,' 'of old-believers,' etc. All of these are acknowledged and admitted by the writers, because the 'slang' of our peasantry is often most wonderful, both in its poignancy and its poetical vein. Some of it is rude, but this doesn't make us discard it altogether. One can learn beautiful expressions from our simple folk who create them on the spur of the moment.

'Pardon,' says Gògol', suddenly breaking up one of his humorous descriptions: 'words seem to have escaped our hero which are heard only in the streets. But such is the position of a writer in Russia: he is bound to reflect the life in which there are things not tolerated by higher society. . . .' Happily, such is the position of a Russian writer—as established by Gògol' three-quarters of a century ago! Whole stories by Gògol', by Shchedrin and L'eskòv, whole pages by Ostròvski (our Molière), by Nekràsov,

No 'slang'  
in Russian.

Maxim Gòr'ki and Chèhov, whole paragraphs by Tolstòy and Dostoyèvski—will never be interpreted, even if they are seemingly 'translated': they will be like an even, silvery moonshine as compared with a crackling bonfire fragrant with burning twigs and sending cascades of sparks into the pitch dark quiet of a night. The same can be applied to national wit of every language as soon as it has a local character: Dickens, Bret Harte, Kipling, Jacobs have no more chances to have their local colloquialism interpreted irreproachably into another tongue than have in parallel circumstances L'eskòv or Gògol'; although I must add that almost every expression the sense of which does not depend on some local topic easily finds its equivalents with us, due to the pliancy and freedom of our language.

For instance, the bewitching, subtle humour of *The Cricket on the Hearth* sounds beautiful when rendered in Russian. All the warmth in it remains intact, yet wholly conveys the English atmosphere. Very few expressions in it are untranslatable. This applies to the whole of Dickens's works (even his *Pickwick Papers*), to Shakespeare, Meredith, Arnold Bennett, Jerome K. Jerome, Birmingham, or Oscar Wilde. This does not mean that all Russian translations from the English are excellent: unfortunately, with the absence of literary convention between our countries, too many Russians who do not possess a



perfect knowledge of the intricacies of English translate and publish English works. But what I mean is that the atmosphere, the style of English speech—with the rare exception of unique colloquialisms—finds its equivalent in Russian and can be translated beautifully. Whereas it is just the style, that something essentially Russian, which cannot be expressed in any other tongue owing to the lack of technical mediums.

Can it be that the local English atmosphere is conveyed more readily to our minds, and that the colloquial English is more easily translated into Russian than *vice versa*—because we know England better than the English people know Russia? We have studied English literature so long (at school and *ad libitum*) that English characters are not strangers to us, and therefore even their typical expressions can be translated literally—when they happen to have no equivalents in our character-speech; they do not baffle or alarm us, but, on the contrary, make the English types stand out the more clearly. Whereas it is quite improbable that an average English reader could vividly imagine the surroundings and the types of Gògol's *Inspector General* or Gor'ki's *Childhood*! How, then, could he stand a close translation of their speech as a natural, human thing? In giving to my English friends the exact meaning of various Russian manners of speech throbbing with poign-

ancy and humour, I constantly hear the intolerant remark: 'Oh! but you mustn't say that in English!'

Untrans-  
latable  
names.

I am thankful to see that the anonymous translator has tried all 'permissible' English to convey Gògol's humorous style in *Dead Souls*; but in the *Inspector General* his most conscientious endeavours were bound to fail. The names alone, for instance, of the Governor and of the Judge are to every Russian mind inseparable from their owners who have been *living characters* to us ever since they were created. Yet, naturally there are blank places corresponding to them in the English version. The chief aim of my book is an attempt to show that the Russian brain works along different channels from the English one—and its manner of doing so—therefore I will try and explain the present instance technically, as it were. For that purpose my patient reader will have to return to that Russian root of many conceptions which means breath, spirit—*duh* (see page 37). Well, with a consonant slipped into it, this noun acquires a comical character: *dmuh* sounds as funny as *duh* sounds serious! Gògol' takes this *dmuh* and turns it into a kind of adjectival name: *Dmuhànovski*. But that is not all: he brings forward the wicked stupidity of the big, fat old Governor by doubling this surname: he makes it *Skvoznik-Dmuhànovski*, which means 'A draught of a *Dmuhànovski*' or

‘a - draught - of - an - empty - headed - pooh - poohing - bully.’

No wonder, a footnote in the English edition says that ‘in order to simplify for the English readers the somewhat formidable caste, the *surnames* of the first eight characters are omitted.’ But that footnote should not run on as it does, explaining—‘as they would not be used in familiar intercourse.’ They are not in real life, that is true, but Gògol’s characters are such vivid, *living* personifications that the beloved classical comedy, *Inspector General*, when shorn of them, is unimaginable and ridiculous! The translator ought to try and explain them, I think. But anyhow, as he has not done so, I must try my best. Therefore, a few more lines about Gògol’s names:

The Judge is in Russian *L’apkin-T’apkin*; the first syllables of the two words through their very sound convey to the Russian mind a rude, clumsy gesture of snapping something greedily. Isn’t this, then, a splendid name for a provincial Russian Judge of seventy years ago who swears that he takes no bribes except in the form of borzoy-puppies!

Hi’estakòv himself (the young and silly rascal taken, from fright, for the official Inspector) means a slashing, swaggering strut. The Warden of the Charity Institutions is ‘Strawberry’—pure and simple. The primitive brute of a policeman is

Derjimòrda, which conveys the idea of 'Catch hold of his dial' (face) ! and indicates the simple way in which the representatives of public order used to follow out their duties. Again, the simple-minded old land-proprietress in *Dead Souls*, who has upset the hero's knavish plans entirely through her simplicity, is called by Gògol' merely Korò-bochka—which means nothing more nor less than 'a little box'; and there was no logical need to turn her in the English version into a 'Korobochkina.' The humour vanishes like a puff of smoke with this 'improvement' on the original name. What would be the translator's idea of rendering some unapproachable, yet typical humorous cossack names used by Gògol', for instance: 'Pour-out-quickly,' 'One-coat-and-a-half,' 'No-respect-for-manger,' 'Fried-eggs'—etc.!

\* \* \* \* \*

Creating  
new words.

The difference between the writings of the English authors and the Russian ones rests with the fact that ours enjoy the perfect freedom of applying to their words and expressions such twists which would be considered and shunned in English as slang, and also of creating new words founded on old roots. Hundreds of these would not pass in England as 'good style,' because, although Tennyson and Carroll, amongst others, have actually invented special words to meet emergencies, nevertheless it does not follow from this that

special twists of expressions of the Russian language which is teeming with them in humour, grief, poetic feeling, and enthusiasm, would all find their equivalents in English; nor would the English translators be permitted to invent any equivalents on the spur of the moment.

With us the power of graphic rendering is an essential quality of art. Turgènev managed to command it without being exclusively Russian in his style, but all the rest of our writers could not help being so, in various degrees. They are given with us a *carte blanche* for creating, as it were. Every kind of definition, every new word is allowed as long as it is born of the atmosphere of the discussed subject and is, therefore, *natural* before everything else. It is the natural that goes home deepest, after all. Recently this *carte blanche* has acquired enormous proportions. Some of the new words and expressions startle one who has been brought up on L'èrmontov, Turgènev, Tolstòy, and even on the extra-richly-coloured Gògol', L'eskòv, and Shchedrìn. Some of these new words and twists of expressions will fall out; but many are throbbing with real new power—for they are natural outcome of a free and creative Slavonic mind working through a most flexible medium.

It is not considered essential that each new word or expression should be of a sufficiently universal importance to stand the test of time. Any amount

of words have been created by Gògol', Tolstòy, L'eskòv, Chèhov, Dostoyèvski, Gor'ki, and several writers of the younger generation, for a special purpose—and some of them will, perhaps, never be used again; but they are just splendid in their own places for which they are invented! They are, naturally, absent from the dictionaries, and the translators will vainly struggle to find out their meaning and to see their essential beauty.

Since 1914 there has been published in Petrograd a formidable periodical. Each volume contains nothing but the newest prose and poetry distinctly reflecting the searching for truth (for *istina*, in this case). Bart Kennedy would have had a chance in it to find by and by *his* bit of Truth, instead of being boycotted by means of mockery and laughter.

The periodical is called *S'ir'in*, the Russian equivalent for Bird of Wisdom. It welcomes to its pages the most gloomy satire as well as the most mystic, or fantastic, or realistic poetry. As to its nationalism, it allows the quaintest examples of verses that ever existed—being, as it were, cries of the old Russian land, frank to the degree of primitiveness and uncanny in the nature of their poetry. I hope I will not give a start to my reader by giving one of them (by the well-known mystic woman-poet, Zinaïda Gippius) in closely following both form and meaning:

*Russia speaking to her Singer.*

A characteristic poem.

I have pleased thee with my meadows green,  
 With my herbs, and tall, white hemlock,  
 With my waving corn spreading far and wide,  
 With the golden hearts of my daisies;  
 Thou mak'st poems of them, thou sing'st joyfully  
 Of my playful self—as thou lovest me:  
 But who will love my ugly wounds ?  
 Who will look at my sins all-forgivingly ?  
 Come !—Love also the evil fogs  
 That rise from my poisonous stagnant pools,  
 Love the huge weeds alongside my walls,  
 Love my poor, drunken peasant. . . .  
 But if fear and contempt are all thou find'st  
 In thy heart for my evils so painful—  
 Then go ! Lose thy way in my forests' mists !  
 Get burnt with my stinging-nettles !  
 I shall not lift the veil from my face  
 For those who seek me the beautiful one,  
 Who can not love me to bitter end,  
 Cannot stand me the ugly one, cannot bear me the  
 dirty one. . . .

The name alone of this periodical indicates the idea that the most ancient in the artistic temperament is not a hindrance, but a help in the search for the New. The name of the bird S'ir'in is equivalent to an Old Slavonic adjective by which it is often replaced and which means ' the one knowing and giving out the Truth.'

The Old Slavonic, which is the cradle of the Russian language, continues to exist in all its purity and is absolutely independent as our language of the Church. Every Russian can under-

The part played by Old Slavonic.

stand it, nevertheless, even without learning. The Bible is usually printed in two columns, Old Slavonic and Russian, and one gets to know the first of them quite well, even without being a church-goer. One says one's prayers in it in early childhood without being told that it is not Russian: one does not think of it, somehow, as being a language in itself, and it is a great mistake to state, as it has been stated in the English Press, that the Russians don't understand the language of their Church. The roots of the words are in an overwhelming majority the same. Just in the same way as Modern Russian, the Old Slavonic has no grammatical articles whatever, neither *the* nor *a*. This degree of simplicity does not exist in any other modern European language. Slavonic is also free of auxiliary verbs, as there exist the same three tenses as in Russian, and the only grammatical difference is, that the verb 'to be' is used in the Slavonic in its present tense. All these similar features between the fountain-spring of the Russian language and its modern form also serve as links of close kinship, besides the similarity of roots. Altogether, the likeness is so great that simple-minded church-goers and devoted Bible-readers are quite unconscious of knowing, after all, two languages. To them the ancient manner of speech appears to be simply a more 'heavenly' one than the modern! In my child-



hood I knew a very old great-granny who used to shed touching tears of delight when the boys would purposely read to her: 'And Judas begat Phares and Zara of Thamar; and Phares begat Esrom; and Esrom begat Aram; and Aram begat Aminadab; and Aminadab begat Naasson; and Naasson begat Salmon. . . .' 'Why are you crying, granny?' they would ask mischievously. 'It is so heavenly!' she would answer with profound joy. The Russian word *bojèstvenno!* is all that is wanted for this English answer and means, literally—*godly!* The highest praise.

A great many genuine Slavonic words are in constant use, interwoven with the Russian speech to such an extent that they only intensify the 'very Russian' colouring of the conversation and literature.<sup>1</sup> This obviously forms an additional difficulty for the translators—I mean for those who know our language sufficiently to realize the fact. This fact is that there exists but one French, or English, or any other word *now in use* in the foreign languages where we often have the choice between the two definitions for the same conception: Modern Russian and Old Russian (or Slavonic) being equally familiar to us. And of these

<sup>1</sup> For instance, we often use the Old Slavonic instead of the Modern Russian—without thinking of its being Old Slavonic—even for conceptions having absolutely *different roots from their modern equivalents*; here is, for instance, a column showing

two it is the second *that carries the essentially Russian spirit with it, without being out of date.*

How, then, could one possibly interpret the difference between a purely Modern Russian speech and the one which is intensified by the use of the familiar Slavonic equivalents, when using the current Modern English only, as even the best of

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what a choice there is at our disposal in the case of quite ordinary words :

<i>English.</i>	<i>Modern Russian.</i>	<i>Ancient.</i>
Devil.	Chort.	B'es.
Dust.	Pýl'.	Prah.
Forest.	L'es.	Dubráva, Bor.
Wicked.	Zloy.	L'úty.
The eyes.	Glazà.	Ochi.
The future.	Bùdushcheye.	Gr'adùshcheye.
Because.	Potomùchto.	Ibo.
Call.	Zov.	Klich.
Strength.	S'ila.	Moshch.
Confession.	Priznàniye.	Ispov'ed'.
Good.	Dobrò.	Blàgo.
Fate.	Sud'ba.	Rok, jr'èbiy.
Wounds.	Ràny.	Yàzvy.
If.	Yesl'i.	Kòl'i.
Depth.	Glub'inà.	Puchina.
Shame.	Styd.	Sram.
Now.	T'ep'er'.	Nýn'e.
To rest.	Otdýhàt'.	Pochivàt'.
Grief.	Gòr'e.	Skorb'.
This.	Eto.	S'iyè.
Lips.	Gùby.	Ustà.
Kiss.	Potzelùy.	Lobzàniye.
Temptation.	Iskushèniye.	Soblàzn.
Other.	Drugòy.	Inòy.
Dance.	Tàn'etz.	Pl'àska.
The thought.	Dùma.	Mysl'.
Flesh.	T'èlo.	Plot'.
Likeness.	S-hòdstvo.	Podòb'iyè.

translators do? The choice which is at our disposal seems not to be at theirs! Meanwhile, remove just that very Russian *nuance de genre* from the pages of Dostoyèvski, Gògol', L'eskòv, Chèhov, Sl'eptzòv, Gòr'ki, Pùshkin, Tolstòy, where the tone of the speaker is to any extent elated, or religiously-poetical, or sarcastic, or humorous—and the characterization will vanish.

It is rather a puzzle to me why those translators <sup>A query.</sup> who can see this characterization in the Russian originals do not use the beautiful Old English expressions. Quite a quantity of them serve the purpose. There seem to be ample equivalents amongst them to that Old Russian style of speech which we instinctively continue using when we feel 'very Russian,' and fondly describe something very Russian. It surprises us that those features of the Old English speech which should be a parallel with the Old Russian, and should serve for parallel purposes, seem to be effete in modern English life; and this in spite of the English insularity and self-respect! Do the translators not care even for those equivalents that could be found in the Old English? Why? Wouldn't their readers understand them? Or is it because they cannot themselves see the difference these expressions make in the Russian original?

Of course, I mean those cases where an essentially English old word could be found as a parallel. In

most cases, I am afraid, they would not correspond exactly; but perhaps a masterly admixture of Chaucer's, Spenser's, or Shakespeare's expressions might at least in some cases suggest the beautiful old element in the current Russian language. I even heard a remark from a well-educated English person that the Old English expressions would make the speech pedantic. This is very strange. With us, everything Old Russian brings with it the atmosphere of warmth and humour and caress, as well as of dignified homeliness, or of the national heroic spirit reflected in the folk-lore. We have no need to dream any 'Dreams of John Ball' in order to enjoy the beauties of the olden speech. The fountain-head of our language is blended with its steadily-increasing modern forms in perfect harmony. The above-mentioned passion for the searching of the new in the realm of the language is a proof of this in itself: every newly-introduced Russian word is essentially Russian, *i.e.*, always founded on a familiar old root. Thus one can force an endless growth of the Russian language, a growth by expansion, without necessarily breaking up and casting away its original individuality. *The genuine age-old element is just the one which—in a fairy-tale way—keeps the artistic Russian nationalism child-young.*

The keys to the fairy-tale, child-young nature of the Russian language.

There is an English volume of translations of our wonder-tales. The translator, Mr. Post Wheeler, has rightly called them wonder-tales:

there exist no fairies in the mind of the folk who created them, and all the wonderful achievements narrated in those tales are accomplished by human heroes, peasants or princes—sometimes aided by a fire-bird or a frog (transformed ‘Tsar-girls’). But the translator never mentions in his preface what difficulties he has been forced to contend with! Mr. Kasso, the late Russian Minister of Education, sent him a letter of congratulation on this volume, but the Russian Ministers of Education have seldom taken a keen interest in Russian enlightenment, especially in the Russian peasant’s unique speech, and Mr. Kasso least of all! His letter, published next to the preface, carries more weight as a diplomatic than a literary document, for Mr. Post Wheeler’s signature is followed by, ‘Secretary of the American Embassy at St. Petersburg.’ This letter does anything but minimize the deplorable fact that the ancient, genuine *façon de parler* of the Russian tales is entirely lost and unrecognizable in the English version. This is inevitable, and could not be helped. But what I wish to point out is the obvious indifference of the translator towards the most precious part of those folk-lore creations: their unique, superb, Old Russian style! He seems to be quite unconscious of it; otherwise he should have made it clear in some form or other.

If the paintings of our Vasnetzòv, Sùrikov,

An explanation  
via other  
channels.

Vrùbel, and Nèsterev had been known in England, my reader would be able to understand me better from a parallel: because these artists give in their colours and in their compositions that same untranslatable element of the Slavonic with which the characteristically-Russian literary style is teeming. Their paintings are not supernatural, not generally-human. Most probably their meaning would remain hidden from the mass of the English public. Yet everyone could feel in them that something which is their spirit. Robbed of that touch of their very own lines and colours, the greatest paintings of Vasnetzòv would turn into nothingness.

Being unable to show them to my reader, I would like to point out to him the Russian peasants' carved wood and toys as the next typical examples. These are rather well known in England by this time. Well, would they remain 'Russian' if you washed away from the woodwork the golden cupolas, the heads of hermits, the ancient palaces built of logs, the rich Byzantian ornamentation, the design of stars, the immense hedges and weeny windows, the ancient head-wear, imposing boyars, the tròyki, the folk-lore subjects? No. The whole industry, so rich in artistic imagination and character, would vanish if anyone had the power to check the springs of its inspiration. The *genre* would disappear, even if the fir-trees and village roofs half buried in snow and the modern village-

types were left to it. Because it is, again, that age-old element which is an inseparable part of the Russian art and which lives on alongside with the newest and most daring in it. Those who had the chance of seeing the Russian ballet and opera at the Drury Lane, in 1914, will clearly follow the current of my thoughts. The striking blend in both colour and sounds of their ancient nature with the most daring New is the keynote of that child-young sincerity and is its fascination. It is obvious to those who have seen the chords of colour and heard the harmony of sound. But neither of these could be 'translated'! The Russian speech deprived of its fundamental and essentially Russian element, would sound the same as 'Borìs Godunòv' or 'Petrùshka,' if these were rendered in C major from beginning to end!

A simpler illustration would be an Irishman's English shorn of its national character. Well, the rich colouring of the Russian literature (not subdivided into little squares of 'slang' and good style) is further away from the correct English than from Pat's. Thus a typical Irish story would lose less by its translation into the Russian than by being retold in pure English.

\* \* \* \* \*

Here are a few examples of interesting derivations which are at the same time very simple. Some simple derivations.

'Work' in English is an independent word,

so to speak, and why it is just so, and nothing else, no one can explain—as one cannot explain the origin of thousands of words in any language. But in Russian work is *rabòta*, the first three letters of which mean serf. This does not point to a specially industrious spirit in our ancestors! But most likely they were poetical lovers of Nature before everything else; and when, in the course of their development, a definition for work had to be created, it appeared in this strikingly frank form. (*Rab*=serf; *rabòta*=work; *ràbstvo*=serfdom.)

The Russian word for excitement comes from the noun wave (*volnà*=wave; *volnèniye*=excitement). It is applied to the high seas as appropriately as to the state of a person whose voice, expressions, looks are 'waving' like the surface of a rough sea. This noun, *volnèniye*, has, of course, a corresponding verb, which literally means 'to wave oneself' (*volnovàtsa*). Thus when we want to say, 'Don't get excited!' we say 'Don't wave yourself!' This is an everyday, simple expression, but we use it without the mocking, humorous touch of voice which so often goes with the English disapproval of excitement. If anything, *volnèniye* is a state of mind which attracts sympathy. And we never think of excitement, either, as the cause of a child's 'liver' three or four days after a Christmas party! It is we who smile here.

\*       \*       \*       \*       \*



There are two ways of saying in Russian, 'I want to.' One of them conveys the idea of conscious will and decision, *yà hochù*=I will (which has nothing to do with the formation of the future tense, as it is not wanted for that purpose); while the other, with the personal noun in the dative (*mn'e* in the place of *ya*) is expressed by the impersonal form of the verb: *mn'e hòchetsa*. The latter form of saying 'I will' conveys a vague desire for something, as if commanded by some power from without, and even the dative of the personal pronoun is usually omitted: *Ne hòchetsa rabòtat'*!=I don't want to work. *Hòchetsa otdohnùt'*!=I want to rest. *Spat' hòchetsa!*=to sleep I want. *Hòchetsa mòlodost'i!*=one wants to be young! (p. 42). All these are amongst the numerous everyday expressions when we subconsciously acknowledge an involuntary desire, as it were. *Hòchetsa l'ubv'ì*—one longs for love—often comes into poems and songs.

It does not matter which of the two aspects (personal or impersonal) of this expression you use about wanting or not wanting a cup of tea, or about going to bed. But it makes a difference whether you say about yourself, *Yà hochù jenìtsa*, or *Mn'è hòchetsa jenìtsa!* Both mean in English that you want to be married, but the first suggests that the choice of a girl has already been settled, and you have finally decided to see the business

Subcon-  
scious will  
reflected in  
verbs.

through; while hòchetsa jenìtsa means generally that you are tired of a bachelor life and you would like to settle down. In olden days, a young Russian girl living in strict seclusion and seeing no alternative to her endless embroidery would wearily murmur, half-abashed at her temerity: 'Zàmuj<sup>1</sup> hòchetsa !'

The author of the *Idiot* says about his man of society, Totzki, that he wanted to marry well; in this case the impersonal form (in the past tense: *hot'èlos'*) is applied as the only logical one, because the man's desire was a general, vague idea which took hold of him.

Altogether, the impersonal form of the verbs winds its way throughout the language and presents one of the characteristic points of the Russian manner of thinking; a whole volume could be written about our verbs alone; and the all-important subtlety of their two 'aspects' of the infinitive greatly accounts for the deficiency of most translations.

No com-  
promise.

But then we have no exact expressions for the ever-present English verbs 'to like' and 'to mind.' I must acknowledge that here the palm for subtle differences in the definition of degrees of feelings belongs to the English language. I can offer only one explanation of this, namely, that we either love a person or a thing, or we don't. There isn't much room for compromise in the Russian heart,

<sup>1</sup> Pages 85 and 86.

and the only alternative is 'this pleases me,' as in French, which is rather a different thing. The English language can claim the verb 'to like' in its entirety.

A very good example of no compromise in the Russian taste is the absence in our language of the eternal English answer, 'I don't mind.' To mind is in itself a very English, a very mild and civilized way of remonstrating; and the not minding is essentially so in consenting to something. There is no vivid wholeheartedness about it, and we very often stop and think after such an answer: 'But does he (or she) really approve of it?' A few months of life in England are necessary to put a stamp of English manners upon us, and then we say a hundred times a day, in quite an English intonation: 'I don't mind.'

Only I reserve to myself the right of doubting whether many of us really begin to feel in this half and half way. In expressions and intonations we get acclimatized very quickly, that's very true; but in our innermost, inherent attitude towards things it is not so easy to have one's nature rolled out smoothly. There is a risk of being impolite? . . . Oh, yes, very often so. Lack of politeness is the natural result of feeling wholly one way or the other. That is why there is such a lot of arguing and debating going on in Russia. If I may touch on the seriousness of to-day, there were very few

advanced people hitherto in our country who 'didn't mind' things as they were—and there are none now. The not minding and not caring has never existed before, nor has this indifferent state so far appeared. But people of enlightened views and Opposition parties have, for the time being, left behind their opinions, habits, and fashions, as soon as they realized that by retaining them they would impede the nation's achievements.

No, the polite and lukewarm indifference will never become a national feature of the land of the Russians. They do mind and they do care—very much so, although they appear to be able to put their personal feelings on one side while their country's freedom is at stake.

\* \* \* \* \*

An every-day capacity.

With this Slavonic capacity of yielding oneself wholly to one's ideas and emotions, it is not surprising to find an everyday Russian word very seldom used in England; here people are more conservative and refuse to be swept off their feet—which, at times, must be more effective in the long run than a hearty yielding to that fascinating sensation! This word is *wlechèniye*,<sup>1</sup> and it means 'the state of being carried or swept away'; the verb is *wlekàtsa*, and means the action of carrying oneself away. Living amongst Russians one per-

<sup>1</sup> Mentioned before, p. 73.

petually hears that someone is being carried away, and you would see proofs of this with your own eyes. You would see people glued to their work, which they are not in the least bound to do—not merely for hours, but day and night for many months on end. That is why Russians wear themselves out physically much sooner than the British. It is as though the sap of life were withdrawn from the Russian body to feed the emotions, whereas with the British the reverse is often the case. With us there are no persons of fifty and upwards presenting that healthy, glowing, youthful appearance which one constantly meets in people of a corresponding age in these isles. Dostoyèvski and Gògol' used to work in that exhausting Russian manner. It results in great, inspired work, but it certainly also mows down and carries those people away too far and too early!

You would hear that someone is carried away by this or that philosophy or system—and you would have to endure the result of it each time he meets you; another by his passion for enlightening the masses, and then you may be sure that that person will not leave alone any servant, or workman, or peasant he comes across for the first time. Yet another is carried away with the arts—the drama above all—and these number legion. Again you will constantly hear a good-natured statement that So-and-So is carried away by So-and-So,

which, needless to say, no one regards as humiliating. It is a tribute to any artist, musician, or social worker to say that he or she is painting, playing, singing, or working with *uvlechëniye*; because everyone who is spontaneously swept away by his work is sure to sweep others along with him.

The nearest to it in English is abandonment, but the Russian *uvlechëniye* does not include any suggestion of the unpleasant side of abandonment.

If you feel that you are being carried away by a marriageable person of the opposite sex, you can safely tell him or her, 'You are carrying me away!'—*Vy m'en'à wlekàyet'e!* This will sound lovable if you are sincere, but it will not give the other party an opportunity of beginning to weave a network of matrimonial schemes. We possess no Breach of Promise Act, and we would never think of passing such a law. It makes Russian people roar with laughter, or thunder with indignation, when they read instances of it in English books or daily press.

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'Bàba'—  
a very  
Russian  
concep-  
tion.

There is a Russian word *bàba*, which is usually translated into English as countrywoman. This is partially right, but not altogether. Every countrywoman is a *bàba*, it is true, and is called so without the least disrespect, in spite of the touch of contempt it originally implied, and which

can be revived when occasion requires. Nowadays, the peasant says in highest praise: 'Molodètz<sup>1</sup> bàba! Boy bàba!'—'boy' literally meaning a fight, a battle—which is an obvious proof that the Russian peasant rather admires vigour and strength in his mate. But the original shade of contempt is distinctly conveyed by the same word, bàba, if you choose to apply it to that special purpose. Both men and women of the educated classes will use it when mentioning some gossiping woman or a company of plain females exclusively absorbed in the sex attraction; and then the denomination bàba fully implies contempt for the hackneyed prerogative of woman. Probably due to the English horror of slang in literature, even this tone, when suggesting first and foremost the sexual element, is invariably neglected and replaced by the respectable definition 'countrywoman,' whereas female would be very often nearer the mark. 'Countrywoman' emphasizes class distinction rather than sex, whereas, in the original, the word bàba embraces both at will. I want to point it out again that in speaking about countrywomen, the word bàba suggests nothing but a natural wholesome idea of the sex—as the word grandmother in Russian, *bàbushka* (derived direct from bàba), shows. No one says in Russian 'mujikì and countrywomen,' but 'mujikì

<sup>1</sup> See p. 42.

and bàby'<sup>1</sup> Yet bàba directly suggests the idea of sex in a more pointed way than jènshchina (woman) does, when the distinction is all-important. Thus, trying to guess the sex of the dirty, stingy old person wrapped up in rags, the hero of Gògol's *Dead Souls* repeats to himself, 'Oy, mujik! Oy, bàba!'—the exclamation *oy* conveying much wonder.

An  
historical  
anecdote.

An historical anecdote will further illustrate the word bàba when it means accentuating the distinction of sex. When Catherine II. usurped her husband's throne on the momentous night in 1762, the men in one of the regiments stationed in Petersburg declared that they would not swear allegiance. Their officers vainly tried to persuade them.

'We won't—we shan't!' they shouted.

'But why?'

'Because she is a bàba!'

A very energetic colonel appeared quickly to put the matter straight.

'You won't swear allegiance to our Mother-Empress?'

'No-o!'

'Why?'

'Because she is a bàba! We won't serve a bàba!'

<sup>1</sup> In plural. Please don't for a second imagine that this word sounds as an English 'baby' does! Remember the Italian *a* and the dark Russian vowel for which *y* stands only as a symbol. (See Introduction.)



‘ Won’t you ? ’ and the energetic man of the hour briskly walked up to the men and proceeded to box the ears of each man. As he continued this steadily, the men gradually fell in, the noise stopped, and the hands went up to salute; but he continued until he was tired.

‘ Well ? ’ his panting voice thundered again, ‘ won’t you swear allegiance to our Empress *now* ? ’

‘ We shall—we will ! ’

‘ Why, you fools,<sup>1</sup> then why didn’t you want to before ? ’

‘ Because,’ they cried unanimously, ‘ no one had explained it to us properly ! ’

Certainly the expression ‘ to explain properly ’ would not be applied in this sense by any soldier nowadays; but the word *bàba* certainly would. Obviously it was not used in order to call Catherine a countrywoman—but with the distinct intention of expressing contempt for her sex.

This characteristic of the word *bàba* is clearly reflected in the critical saying, ‘ Quite *po-bàbyi* ! ’ Men use it at the sight of women’s wiles to which they (men) ‘ would never resort ’ themselves: tears, coaxing, proverbial cunning, etc.

Altogether it seems to me that the word *bàby* for the Russian peasant women deserves exactly the same popularity as the word *mujiki* has already

<sup>1</sup> In this case the word for fools, *duraki*, was surely applied in its intensified form, *durachyò*, which conveys boundless contempt.

won. This would, perhaps, also help in sketching the mental picture of a Russian peasant woman as being so different from an English one: she does not possess or dust a mantelpiece; she does not make dainty little cakes with baking-powder at five minutes' notice, for there is no baking-powder in Russia and she kneads her yeast-made black bread thrice the night before; she does not 'change' in the afternoon, and does not walk about till then with paper curlers sticking from her head like a porcupine in utter ignorance of her ugliness. (If a Russian bàba should encounter such an apparition, she would be likely to stop short in amazement and to cross herself for safety.) She often lives through her life without knowing of a hat or a corset, or even of other underwear; very often goes about barefooted. But she vigorously cleanses herself with boiling-hot water and steam each week in the village public *bàn'a*, as every moujik does;<sup>1</sup> neither of them would call an English bedroom-bath anything but a saucer; she makes her own linen chemises from the home-grown flax; she embroiders all her table-cloths and

<sup>1</sup> 'A-ah! Nice! . . . Now we feel Russia heart and soul with us! . . .' say the Russian soldiers as they emerge from the bath-trains behind the trenches. An hour weekly in the hot steam of a *bàn'a* (Turkish bath-house) is the same as daily bread to a Russian moujik. . . . 'We now feel Russia behind us!' . . . By the way, the *bàn'a* is an ancient genuine Russian institution, not at all introduced by the Turks.

towels, to say nothing of chemises and shirts; and she looks after the cattle and works in the fields with the strength and vigour of an unsophisticated riginal. This work is a matter of course to her, side by side with man.

That is what a bàba is—versus the probably wrong vision of an English reader who is likely to imagine a Russian countrywoman wearing a ‘best hat’ and corsets. On a Sunday she looks very trim and bright without possessing these, and spends, if possible, her Sunday afternoon and evening in sociable merry-making, often with a touch of art in her uvlechèniye.

Each of the two types, if they met, would mutually regard each other with compassionate contempt.

\* \* \* \* \*

The English reader will be surprised to learn that the universally-known expression, ‘Ivan the Terrible,’ for Ivan Gròzny, is not correct. Being an epithet meant for a special definition of a Tsar’s personality—and one of Ivan’s nature, too!—it would be surely translated correctly if there existed an equivalent for it. But *gròzny* is just one of those Old Russian terms which seem to have no equivalents in the West. There is a different word which stands exactly for ‘terrible’ with us (*ujàsny*). But *gròzny* is an adjective derived directly from the nouns ‘thunder-storm’ (*grozà*)

Two historical definitions wrongly translated.

and 'thunder' (*grom*); not simply 'storm,' for which we have several other nouns, but exactly thunder-storm. Thus *gròzny* carries a more picturesque idea with it than 'terrible.' We apply the term *gròzny* for everything that is silently dark and menacing and frowning, like the advance of a thunder-storm when you don't know whether it will leave you alive or not. If William the Silent were a Russian Tsar' he would be probably called *Gròzny*. With the additional syllable of nuance *po* which gives a touch of finish to the idea, the same root makes the world-renowned word *pogròm*; another twist—and it is transformed into 'fulminating mercury,' one of the most terrible explosive substances known (*gremùchaya rtut'*).

Equally untranslated by the historians and grammarians remains the term applied by us to the times of Dmitri and his few successors. In English this period of the Russian history is mostly called 'The Stormy Times.' But with us it is not 'stormy': the idea of our adjective in this case is the same which we apply to the state of water when something has rendered it turbid; or to the outlines of a landscape made undistinguishable by mist; or to an unaccountable feeling of foreboding. . . . There is an element of heavily-weighting unaccountability in that adjective (*smùtny*) which is absent in its translations.

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In Russian a special twist is given to some nouns through the addition of the termination *shchina*. It implies the whole atmosphere of ideas, feelings, and actions which have grown around a certain person, or a set of people, which forms its original centre, as it were. It is parallel to the Western 'ism,' e.g., Sheridanism, Voltairianism, Bismarckism, etc. So *Bironovshchina* stands for the most cruel officialdom, such as Biron, the German favourite of the Tsaritsa Anna (1730-1740), first introduced in Russia; *Hovànshchina* is more or less known in England as the title of the beautiful opera given in Drury Lane in 1914, in which the whole world surrounding the Prince Hovànski forms the plot of the drama. *Dostoyèvshchina* would be easily understood by every Russian, although it has just occurred to me on the spur of the moment: every student of Russian literature will realize that I mean the everlasting exaltation of suffering or of love, and the eternally throbbing nerves of Dostoyèvski himself and of all his characters, with which they intensify the weight of every moment, of every passing word or thought. . . .

Sometimes the all-embracing quality of the ending *shchina* is attached not to a person, yet keeps its power of giving a bold character sketch—and that is where it is particularly popular and graphic: so, Dostoyèvski himself constantly uses in the *Brothers Karamàzov* the word *ugolòvshchina*:

Special  
twists to  
the nouns.

Mrs. Constance Garnett translates it by 'crime'—the only way it can be translated approaching the original; but, being an excellent student of both languages, she is sure to know what I am going to say here, namely: that crime in Russian is quite another word, *prestuplèniye*; but that Dostoyèvski uses *ugolòvshchina* purposely, as a word conveying a much stronger flavour of something gross about it. Every crime is *prestuplènie*, whereas *ugolòvnoye prestuplèniye* means specially a crime of homicide, and the courts dealing with it are called *ugolòvny sud* (the root of the word, *golovà*, means head). Now this adjective, *ugolòvny*, is twisted by Dostoyèvski into a noun by the special termination, *ugolòvshchina*, on purpose to suggest the whole gross atmosphere of Karamàzov's crime. ' . . . There is the scent of *ugolòvshchina* about it ' is an expression used not only by Dostoyèvski's characters, but often heard in the practice of the judicial circles when a guess at some appalling criminal affair is made.

A quite familiar, everyday word with us is *kaz'ònshchina*, which conveys our scorn of official routine. The root of this word is *kaznà*, and means Government funds; the adjective from it, *kaz'ònny*, means everything belonging to the Government, and is applied to service in civil or military circles, to schools and institutions, to buildings and all sorts of property belonging to the Government;

officials live in a *kaz'ònnaya kvartìra*; there is a whole ocean of *kaz'ònnoye* ink and paper used in the offices; a soldier wears *kaz'ònnyie* boots and clothes, etc. But, due to Russia's past history, this adjective has acquired a distinct meaning of dryness and stiffness, and therefore is used with irony or sarcasm as an epithet directly defining these qualities. Thus, a Russian peasant speaking of some official who refused to listen to his requests or explanations, will wave his hand and say: ' *Kaz'ònnaya dushà!*'—thus implying that he gives up hope, because what can be expected from a man whose soul (*dushà*) is not his own, as it were, but merely an appendage of the Government? . . . Or, a style of writing devoid of vivacity and freedom is universally called *kaz'ònny stil'*. Again, Russian schoolboys—people possessing the strongest digestion in the world!—are often laughingly spoken of amongst themselves and by their elders as having ' *kaz'ònnyie* ' stomachs: nothing can possibly upset them.

This characteristic of immovable stiffness is still further accentuated by the ending discussed above, which turns it into a noun—*kaz'ònshchina*. This is the word which the old cynic *Karamàzov* uses in speaking of the monastic life, and which is translated merely as routine or convention. The poignant, flippant flavour is all gone from the original word. I repeat, this is not the

fault of the translator in this and similar cases, but the impossibility in other languages of making all these telling, all-important twists.

Very interesting is the fact that various terminations used *ad libitum* for nouns, adjectives, and even other parts of speech, not only carry very distinctly different shades of meaning, but suggest the attitude of the speaker, indicating the various tones of voice in which all these definitions would be uttered. For instance:

The expression of old Karamàzov, 'Jidy, Jidki, Jid'ishki, and Jid'en'àta,' does not mean 'Jews, Jewesses, and Jewkins,' as it is translated: they convey, through this assortment of terminations, nothing but the speaker's contemptuous attitude to the Jews, whilst their wives and children are not implied at all. It would be nearer the tone of the original to translate it 'all sorts of dirty, wretched Jews.' True, Jiden'àta is often used for defining Jewish youngsters; but, along with the other diminutives, this word stands here solely to underline Karamàzov's tone of contempt, and this is clear from the next phrase in the original, in which Karamàzov says, as an antithesis: 'but I ended by being received by Hebrews.' Mrs. Constance Garnett translates this: 'received by Jews high and low alike.' But in this paragraph she has not understood the original (an exceptional case). May I explain that it carries distinctly all the differ-

'Jew' and  
'Hebrew.'



ence which, in Russia, rests with the choice between the words Jew and Hebrew. Strangely enough, in other languages, even in Yiddish itself, the people of that race are called Jews, and they accept it as a matter of course; but in Russia the Jews are bitterly offended when they are so called (Jidỳ). In fact, no one does it, except with intentional insult. One takes great care not even to pronounce this name (even in the form of an adjective) in the presence of Jews at all: it *must* be Hebrew (*Yevrèy*). Thus, saying that his business ended by his acquaintance with Hebrews, whilst it began with Jidishki and Jid'en'àta, old Karamàzov obviously uses the selection of contemptuous terminations with the purpose of distinguishing the Jidkì from Hebrews, whom he thus classifies as a better type and is prepared to respect.

That same attitude of the speaker towards the object winds its way throughout the numberless endings expressing, *ad libitum*, love, contempt, fear, respect, etc. The old cynic Karamàzov himself is called by his philosophical son Ivàn a 'starishishka'—a twist of the word for old man which breathes of nothing but disgust; while *stàrche* is used by everybody as a term of profound respect for the other old man in the book, Zosima, although both forms of the word come from, and mean, old man.

Tender-  
ness and  
love wind-  
ing their  
way  
through-  
out the  
language.

In the Western world one does not meet with characters like Al'òsha, Zosìma, 'Idiot,' Platon Karavàyeve, Tsar' Feodor Ioanovich, Gòr'ki's 'Granny,' Sòn'a Marmelàdova, and other such outstanding characters in Russian literature and history. Naturally enough, the style of language surrounding these types can be nothing else but essentially Russian. They are living embodiments of utterly selfless love, and therefore the whole world of their language and of the language surrounding them—the Russian language of love—is unimaginable and non-existent in any other language. It is essentially Russian in many features. To begin with its terms of endearment, for instance: my falcon bright, my bright light, my red sun, my rodnòy (see p. 59), etc. But this is far from being all; the order of the words itself commands various degrees of 'caressiveness'—the latter in itself being a characteristic feature, without which the Russians could not live. To return to the order of the words, 'my dear boy' in Russian carries with it considerably less 'caressiveness' than 'boy thou mine dear'! It sounds ugly in English, but beautiful in Russian. It is placed by Dostoyèvski in the mouth of Zosìma when addressing Al'òsha, and is inevitably translated in the only one correct English way.

There is a passionate love for the soul of Nature

and soul of Man which radiates human warmth and sympathy winding its way throughout the whole of Russian literature: through Tolstòy's and Dostoyèvski's classical characters in prose, through Nekràsov's poetry, Ostròvski's drama and comedy, through the modest types of Chèhov and Gòr'ki. In one of his brief sketches, Chèhov brings out a vivid figure of a quiet monk who takes people across a ferry to his monastery for the Easter midnight service: he is in an ecstasy of love and worship. Being also a born literary artist, he speaks of the subtle beauties of expression to be found in the Old Slavonic psalms; he mentions the Akaphist to the Virgin, and says: 'The shortest line addressed to her should breathe of sunshine and wind, of the beauty of God's thunder-storms and of the little field flowers. . . .'

Diminutive forms more than often do not mean 'little' at all, but suggest something else characteristic of the moment.<sup>1</sup> For instance, when Dmitri Karamàzov observes a responsive spark in the eyes of his brother Al'òsha, he calls them 'glaz'ònki': neither simply glazà nor glàzki, both

<sup>1</sup> There is an excellent example given in Mr. Nevill Forbes's Russian grammar: he says that when a guard on a Russian train, asking you to show your ticket, uses the word *bil'èt'ik* instead of saying it in its original form, *bil'èt*, it means that he will not decline a tip! This is perfectly right, and beautifully illustrates *the attitude of the speaker*, expressed in one little additional syllable!

meaning eyes, but *glaz'ònki* : this is because Dostoyèvski wanted to convey to his reader the exact manner in which Dmitri Karamàzov was struck by the responsive flash in his brother's gaze. It needs a whole paragraph to carry it in English; the termination chosen by Dmitri (*glaz'ònki*) conveys approximately this: ' Ah ! those dear, serious eyes of yours; they, too, can sparkle with the ecstasy of passion ! . . . You understand me—I can see it in their gleam, and I love you the more for it. . . .' Dmitri's discovery of a weak spot in his pure-minded brother, and of loving him the more for it, is all expressed in that ending of the word which he has chosen from amongst several other terminations.

One of the latter, for example, is *glaz'ishche*, used on fantastically uncanny occasions; thus, in speaking of the meeting of a child with a witch, the story-teller will describe her eyes, in a voice of horror, as ' green *glaz'ishche* glittering with a baneful light.' Or, the vacant gaze of a half-witted street-corner philosopher would inspire his comrades with the desire to shake him and say: ' Gey, wake up ! Why are thy *glaz'ishche* coming out of thine head ?'

That same termination goes beautifully with the boots (ordinarily, *sapcqi*) of a man who steps into your house from a muddy road without having wiped them; we dislike dirty boots intensely, and

the first thing you will call out on this occasion (instead of remarking politely that 'it is very wet indeed') will be:

'Vÿtri (wipe) sapojîshchi-to! Ish, natoptâl!' Well, in this short phrase the termination added to the ordinary word for boots makes one instantly visualize the glance of disgust which the speaker has cast on those clumsy boots, heavy with mud sticking on to them; *to* is one of the eloquent particles that form no part of speech at all, but are bits of various words; it stands here for further intensifying your demand to see those boots wiped first of all! *Ish* is another of those particles, and stands for 'There, just look at him!' While *natoptâl* (the past tense, in singular, masculine, from the verb *toptât'* = to tread, with the additional syllable of nuance *na*) means: 'Hasn't he made a mess on the floor!'

Total: Sixteen English words necessary to convey the meaning of the three words and two 'particles' of the Russian original.

Sometimes a diminutive ending conveys boundless mockery. For instance, the *piskâr'iki* (in the scene of the scandal at the monastery, *Brothers Karamâzov*) is translated by Mrs. Constance Garnett as 'gudgeons' and couldn't be translated as anything else, because *piskâr'iki* are gudgeons as well as *piskâr'î*; but there is a world of difference in the tone of the speaker, who is using the first one in-

stead of the second: Karamàzov selects it to express a world of scorn and most emphatic defiance.<sup>1</sup>

Various terminations conveying the exact attitude of the speaker.

There are caressive terminations given even to adjectives and adverbs. For instance, Dostoyèvski, in describing the grey hair of the elder Zosìma, calls it not simply *s'edyie* (grey) hair, but *s'èd'en'kiye*—which every Russian would also do, because the old man whose appearance is described is good and attractive and sweet and small. One could not possibly say *s'èd'en'kiye* about the hair of a man if one hated him! Yet in another language it can be nothing else but simply 'grey' (*s'edyie*)—unless it is 'greyish,' which is a different thing; and thus the lovable *attitude of the speaker* is not conveyed here any more than it is in hundreds of similar cases. (By the way: *s'edyie* stands for grey hair only: grey mice, or donkeys, or coats, etc., are *s'eryie*.)

If you speak of a far distance without specially objecting to its being far, you make the adverb *dal'ekò* (far) into a *dal'òkon'ko!* Or, in trying to persuade your friend to come with you to your destination, you say it is *bliz'òhon'ko*, in a coaxing tone of voice, instead of saying simply *blizko*, although both mean 'near' in English—a word which could not possibly be distorted. Or 'early' is in Russian *ràno*. To express unpleasant anticipation at the thought of compulsory early rising

<sup>1</sup> I allude so frequently to this special book, being under the impression that it is the one Russian novel which has really attracted attention amongst the English public.

you would say—*ranavàto!* Whereas, speaking of rising to enjoy the beauties of the dawn, you would say, with keen appreciation, ‘It was so beautiful this morning that I got up *ran’òhon’ko!*’ This latter twist to the adverb is also used in a tone of childish complaint, as in the opera ‘*Rusàlka*’ (Mermaid) when the forsaken heroine complains that her husband wakes her up very early for the sole purpose of telling her that he will be absent for the day as usual!

Even some conjunctions carry different degrees of the same meaning with a partial alteration of the word; thus, *otchevò* means ‘Why?’—but if the question is asked in a rude tone, it is expressed by the absence of the first syllable. Thus, you would affectionately reproach your friend: ‘*Otchevò* did you not come and see me when I expected you!’ But, if an old comrade thrusts himself into your private den at an inconvenient moment, you are sure to exclaim with irritation: ‘*Chevò* hast thou come at this hour?’ Or, in a crowd in which everyone is eager to get to the front, you will not infrequently see a fellow who is elbowing his way through, stopped by the none too polite query: ‘*Chevò* dost thou push?’<sup>1</sup> The Russian crowd is

<sup>1</sup> It is this sort of ‘why’ that would be used in the above-quoted remark addressed to a street-corner philosopher.

It should be noted that it is a different word to the genitive of the pronoun ‘what’ (*chto, chevo*, etc.). The rude half of the conjunction ‘why’ goes exclusively with verbs, not nouns.

rougher than an English one, and the same people who will show great depth of feeling in matters of importance remain insensitive where mere politeness is concerned. To us politeness does not necessarily indicate goodness of heart.

Numerous adjectives defining shapes, colours, or any other qualities are given that twist of caressiveness if the speaker is in a gentle, appreciative mood. So, *b'èly* means white; but *b'èl'en'ki* means nice and white. Speaking of a pretty white kitten or puppy you are most likely to apply the caressive form of the adjective, *b'èl'en'ki*; but a snow-covered landscape or a white elephant could not be possibly called otherwise than *b'èly!* Well—perhaps with one exception: if you did wash and scrub a white elephant or a white hippopotamus with your own hands, and took rather a pride in it, you might say, in admiration: ‘Look at him! Isn’t he *b'èl'en'ki* now?’

Likewise, you would call a blue sky *golubòye n'èbo*; but a baby’s blue blanket would be more likely to be called *golùben'koye*. (Again, these examples do not mean whitish or bluish at all: in that case they would acquire still different terminations.)

Don Quixote was thin, *hudòy*; whereas a frail, meek boy is *hud'en'ki* in the conception of his mother, and simply *hud* in the definition of a business-like doctor.

Sancho Panza was a *jirny* fellow, fat; but when



the Russian Easter markets are teeming with nice, fat, pink *poros'ata*, sucking pigs, their owners, the shopkeepers, in inviting the crowds of buyers each to his stall, call out in an appetizing manner—twisting both the name of the tasty subjects and their desired quality in an admiring way: *Poros'atki jim'en'kiye!* *Poros'onochki prejrinye!* . . . *Pojaluyt'e* (be welcome) *gospoda*, *pojaluyt'e!* . . .'

Only the adjectives depicting qualities of power, beauty, alertness, as well as those dealing with abstract and wider conceptions, or those defining unattractive qualities, keep their original forms always—quite logically, too: because they command respect, admiration, serious thought, or displeasure, and not a merry, lovable or humorous attitude. Such are, for instance, *mogùchi*=powerful, *pr'ekràsny*=beautiful, *býstry*=quick, *lòvki*=alert, *v'èchny*=eternal, *sm'ertny*=mortal, *po-b'èdny*=victorious, *mìrny*=peaceful, etc.

\* \* \* \* \*

Effectively balancing the caressiveness of the Russian language there is its poignancy. A great deal of poignancy has been lost (or perhaps purposely omitted?) in the Russian works by the translators' dropping almost all the graphic, pointed expressions which are labelled 'slang' in English. I have already mentioned that our authors do not hesitate for a moment to use slang, not only in the mouths of their characters, but in speaking for

Poignancy  
of expres-  
sions.

themselves. For instance, the words quoted in the footnote below<sup>1</sup> and taken at random from a standard English translation are incomparably less cutting, less sarcastic than they are in the Russian original. And again, greatly trusting and admiring Mrs. Constance Garnett's knowledge of the Russian language, I can only suggest that she must feel cramped and limited by the non-existence of many equivalents in English as well as by the ostracism exercised by English literature over everything not *comme il faut*, even when it is the very expression which would put the spark of life into a bookish phrase. There certainly exists some splendid English slang which cannot be translated even into the Russian; but we feel it a very provoking and very disappointing thing to be at a loss on these rare occasions! We would never think of improving an author by polishing his language. And it would be exceedingly interesting to know what makes the translators deprive Gør'ki and Dostoyèvski of the

<sup>1</sup> For instance: Puny weakling, fantastical fellows, to attach himself to a good family, on the slightest encouragement, greediness, orgies of drunkenness, had thrown herself into, he gets rid, father, not over scrupulously, blackguard, telling lies, run at your father with a knife, the piano, uttered his foolish tirade, it was a nonsensical idea of mine, I want to pass for a man, that is what pulls him through, they don't smell it, unclean, get up! thou liest, thrashing, girls, drunk, emasculate, dirt, regular fright, quite, what is this to do with, nice looking, etc.—These phrases and expressions are *not at all slang in English, which they ought to be if they were meant to convey the author's tone* in his narrative.

colours which should remain inseparable from their palettes: is it their entire absence from amongst the English paints? Or have they no passports into English literature?

Another Query.

\* \* \* \* \*

Talking about slang, I would like to mention something about Russian swear-words and expressions of anger in general. We are not goody-goodies. There seems to be room for everything in the Russian nature—and Russian speech. A very popular manner of swearing in Russia is the one summed up in wishing all sorts of uncomfortable things for the victim:

Some Russian swear-words.

‘Mayest thou feel empty!’ (suggesting both material and spiritual emptiness, hunger and loneliness).

‘May crayfish trample thee flat!’

‘May *It* blow thee up as large as a mountain!’

‘Mayest thou have no top or bottom!’

‘This is enough to carry the Saints (the ikons) out!’ Or: ‘Carry away my grief!’ . . . These two exclamations escape us when we hear giftless singing, or playing, or some utter nonsense.

There must be a kind of instinctive competition in imagination in this case in every language, I am sure. The more boundless the imagination the better! I don’t mean that there exists no swearing or cursing in Russia which is not fit to be acknowledged by any language. Gòr’ki calls it ‘idiotically mean,’ and says that it remains dark

even to the minds of those beasts who utter it. But I would like to say, by the way, that there are many curses centring round dogs, which would cut to the heart those English ladies who call themselves the 'mothers' of their pet dogs. . . . This, in its turn, jars upon us! There exist no households in Russia where the dog's outing or food would form a recurring topic of conversation even at meals.

The old English expression 'Scratch a Russian, find a Tartar' ought to be forgotten—for more than one reason. Firstly, because a Russian does not need any scratching in order to get at his innermost self. Really, of our two nationalities it is not the Russian that does need it! . . . It is the best part of a Russian that you always know where you are when you have to deal with him. Secondly—or rather consequently—it is not the Tartar at all that comes out with (unnecessary!) scratching, but the true, real Russian himself. Because his next best quality is many-sidedness: he allows himself to be openly angry when he feels angry, just as he allows his heart to go out to people when they do appeal to him. We are not capable of concealed fermenting, whether with wrath or exaltation. Therefore the expressions *chort voz'mì!* (devil take it!) and *chort znàyet!* (devil knows) are much more homely with us than they are in this country, especially as we have two words for devil: *b'es* is a sinister, right-down

wrathful personality, while *chort* is a spirit of mischief — unpleasant, but understandable! When angry, a Russian does not search in his pocket for words, as we say, but he has no need, either, to search for them when he is delighted with you.

The things that make a Russian most angry are: injustice, stupidity, cruelty, narrowness, and giftless rendering of art's creations.

Just another few lines before I close this topic. There exists one very quaint and very Russian word—not exactly a swear-word, but an expression of neglect and of distaste for someone. Please remember the respect with which intellect is regarded in Russia; but if I succeeded in making that point clear at the beginning of the book (pp. 17, 18), you will not feel surprised for more than one moment that the term of contempt I am about to explain is derived from the noun meaning brains! Yes, *mozgi* is brains, and is often used for intellect, just as in the English phrase 'he has got brains'; but the adjective *mozgl'avy*, or, still worse, *mozgl'aven'ki* is a most unpleasant characteristic. Its nature is very subtle, though, and I wonder whether I shall be able to explain clearly. Again I must look for help in Dostoyèvski: the old father Karamàzov was a *mozgl'avy* starichishka—the last word meaning in itself a nasty, objectionable, little old man. He had brains, yes: but he had brains only, and the other characters in the book call him moz-

A unique term to depict a dismerit.

gl'avy with disgust. The word carries an idea of dry-as-dust brains, of a large skull over a shrivelled body, of a leering smile; on the whole, of an intellect not supported by the blood of the heart, nor even by a healthy physique. Thus the Russian definition is as unique as it is poignant. We do not use the adjective 'brainy' with respect, as it is used in English; we do possess it (*mozgovòy*), but it goes only with medical and anatomical definitions. We do say 'this business needs brains'; but the moment the noun is turned into the adjective *mozgl'avy* it goes with people's characters only and means brainy in a wretched, withered, bloodless, warmthless way.

\* \* \* \* \*

'Nadrýv.' I wonder whether the word *nadrýv* contains its exact meaning in its English aspect, 'laceration.' This is one of the beloved words of Dostoyèvski, simply because it conveys the atmosphere of that typical Russian spiritual suffering. Laceration, in English, means not only tearing something which still remains intact as a whole, but also a rending into distinct parts. Now, *nadrýv* means exclusively a rough, but not final rent—whether in a substance or a situation: the syllable *nad* being there distinctly for the purpose of conveying this nuance; because a complete laceration is *razrýv*, and not *nadrýv*. Both of these words are applied in Russian to concrete as well as to abstract sub-

jects. A *nadryv* in one's faith, or love, or friendship, is a universally acknowledged pain. *It causes efforts to mend things* where a final blow (laceration = *razryv*) would be more logical and more bearable.

Dostoyèvski's ultra-Russian characters torture themselves with their ultra-noble efforts to do things which are superhuman, but which they regard as essential, highest and purest. Therefore they do not attempt to attain the relief which a final laceration (*razryv*) would give them, but go on painfully enjoying a *nadryv*: *i.e.*, that half-rent which makes them continually try and persuade themselves that their superhuman efforts are not only just and beautiful, but attainable as well.<sup>1</sup>

So, Katerina Ivanovna is trying with all her might to love the reckless Dmìtri when she loves Ivàn. Or, to take a modern example, if a girl engaged to a soldier at the front tried to continue loving him if he lost both his arms and legs, this would be a typical *love with nadryv* as Dostoyèvski means it. *Nadryv* may also mean a 'breaking-point' in people's relations; but this English definition would not convey any more than 'laceration' does that

<sup>1</sup> Parallel to the nouns *nadryv* and *razryv*, in connection with tearing, there are:

*Nadlòm* and *raslòm*—in breaking;

*Nadr'èz* and *razr'èz*—in cutting.

In each case the first definition conveys the incomplete action; whereas the second means that things are completely rent, finally broken and divided.

particular painful effort—moral effort—in one's own heart which is typical of the Russian nature as illustrated by Dostoyèvski. I wonder whether there is a perfect absence of that supernatural effort in the English nature? Or what is it else that accounts for the absence in the English language of a definition for this subtle human capacity?

I must make haste and reassure my reader that not all Russians live at such a red-hot pace! But Dostoyèvski himself did, and therefore instinctively made his heroes do likewise. Bits of their personalities are scattered all over the land, if I may say so; but they do not appear very frequently in their entirety. It was Dostoyèvski's vocation to pick them out and to show them to humanity, enveloped in his great love. And the Russians recognized their weak brethren, those great sufferers, and made them live in their hearts for ever.

But my English friends, after they have read Dostoyèvski, ask me with a sincere, guileless smile: 'Do Russian men cry?'

I hope Englishmen would cry, too, if they ever lived in their inner lives at the rate Dostoyèvski's men do. They would be unhuman if they didn't. But I cannot very well imagine Englishmen confessing even to their most cherished friends, and in moments of superlative excitement, anything resembling Dmìtri Karamàzov's frank avowal:



‘ . . . When I do leap into the pit, I go headlong with my heels up, and am pleased to be falling in that degrading attitude, and pride myself upon it, and think it to be beautiful—and in that very depth of degradation I begin a hymn of praise. Let me be cursed, and vile, and base, but I too kiss the hem of the veil in which my God is shrouded. Though I may be following the devil, I am Thy son, O Lord, and I love Thee, and I feel throughout me that joy without which the world could not be there. . . .’

Or like Ivàn Karamàzov:

‘ . . . Though I may not believe in the order of the universe, yet I cherish the sticky little leaves in spring. . . . I know that I am going to a graveyard, but it is a most precious graveyard: precious are the dead that lie there, every stone over them speaks of such burning life in the past, of such passionate faith in their work, their truth, their struggle, and their science, that I know I shall fall on the ground and kiss those stones and weep over them; though I am convinced in my heart that it’s long been nothing but a graveyard. And I shall not weep from despair, but simply because I shall be happy in my tears, I shall steep my soul in emotion. . . .’

The graveyard thus alluded to by Ivàn is the world of his education abroad. The Romance ‘ precious dead ’ might be surprised with such a

passionate attitude towards them of a man of twenty-three! He is not shy to express it.

A few lines further on, Ivàn adds:

‘ I love the sticky leaves in spring, I love the blue sky. . . . It isn’t a matter of intellect or logic—one loves *nutròm*, *chrèvom*. . . . ’

These last two words are translated: ‘ With one’s inside, with one’s stomach. . . . ’

I cannot let this pass. *Chrèvo* is not the Modern Russian, but the Old Slavonic, for stomach, which makes all the difference to the colouring of this sentence in the original. The first of the two words, *nutròm*, is not an everyday definition for inside, either. I understand that the English of the Authorized Bible presents some luxurious choice of beautiful ancient expressions; and, in the given instance, the Old Russian expression corresponds to the lines appearing in the old version of the English Bible twice (1 Kings iii. 26 and Genesis xliii. 30): ‘ For her bowels yearned upon her son,’ ‘ For his bowels yearned upon his brother.’ The only subtle difference being that ‘ yearning ’ is nearer to the Russian conception *toskà* (p. 91) than to the overpowering thirst for loving which Dostoyèvski saw in Ivàn’s heart. Nevertheless, the quoted biblical expression does convey the idea of the immense difference it would make if adopted in translating, and the justice it would do in that

way to the original. As it stands now, how an English reader must laugh at the way of 'loving with one's inside, with one's stomach!' How common it sounds in modern, everyday English! Yet, we apply the definition *nutròm* not only to loving in an intense, instinctive way, but even to acting in a beautiful manner. The most beloved of our greatest actors and actresses are always those who create their parts, not merely with the help of refined mentality, but also by living in them with every fibre of their bodies and all the innermost particles of their egos. That is called playing *nutròm*. Certainly not one genius of the Russian stage would be able to understand how to follow the minute instructions which English dramatists shower on English actors. It would be utterly impossible to him to play *nutròm*, *i.e.*, actually living through every moment of the play with the highest intensity of which a human creature is capable, while handicapped by the author in every step and gesture.

Thus the expression to love with one's inside, with one's stomach, must look to the English eye 'funny;' it does no justice to the feeling which in this country is usually well screened by decorum. Here is again the same old difficulty—the difference in national characteristics. The dislike of the English for mentioning their feelings leaves them unable to invent words to define these

feelings. As to actually experiencing them, I cling to the bright hope that 'perhaps a hundred, perhaps ten, perhaps one . . .' amongst refined Englishmen *has* cried for once in his life with exaltation, or with the complexity of his spiritual suffering!

. . . 'I am vile, and I am pleased with myself. Yet I suffer with being pleased with myself' . . . says Dmitri.

'One lives in his books; Dostoyèvski makes one,' writes one of my brilliant English friends; 'but I feel physically exhausted after having been for an hour or two in company with the Karamàzovs. Is it the even tenor of my English mind—rural and philosophic—which refuses to be disturbed by the intensity of their emotions?'

It is inevitable that a great writer like Dostoyèvski should arouse a sense of disturbance in all equable philosophic minds, and although I feel sorry to see my beloved friends exhausted, yet . . . I think Dostoyèvski may do them a little good!

As it is, I have been pleasantly surprised to hear many a time another English remark on the same author: 'It is most extraordinary: he shows you the vilest situations, describes the darkest crimes, and yet you don't feel indignant with his characters. You feel just sorry for them.'

This leads to the gist of Dostoyèvski's command-

ment: . . . ' We are all the same. . . . We may be better where we are, but we would have been just the same in their places. . . . '

I met one Englishman (just one, labelled by his friends as ' quite mad ') who said:

' I realize that Dostoyèvski is undeniably right in stating this.'

\* \* \* \* \*

Talking in Russian, I just came across another nice little illustration of the graphic power of various terminations given to nouns *ad libitum*. It concerns ' aunt ' and ' uncle,' and is a vivid example of the simplicity with which the attitude of the speaker is conveyed by means of merely altering the ending of the word.

The metamorphoses of ' aunt ' and ' uncle.'

If you have an aunt, and you are a nice little boy, or girl, you apply to her the generally-polite form of the noun—*t'èt'a*, тетя; in cases when you feel inclined to cuddle up in her lap, or to inspire her with the idea of presenting you with a new toy, you address her as *t'èt'ichka*, тетичка. When you attain the school-days wisdom, and with it a certain disregard for troublesome relatives, you call her *t'ètka*, тетка—if she is not within earshot; but, being brought up to good manners, you address her by the respectful *t'ètushka*, тетушка. Meanwhile, the time rolls on; and presently you may find some reasons for being particularly nice to her: then you begin addressing her as *t'èt'en'ka*,

тетенька! But take care to look very serious and nobly-old-fashioned about it, because this aspect of the word *only just conceals* its inner touch of humour! The latter is bursting through its drawing-roomy respectability—and if your *t'èt'en'ka* has not yet survived her sense of humour, she may some day surprise you by a whimsical nod, saying:

“Go away with your *t'èt'en'ka*, I don't feel old enough as yet to write my will; and if I do I shall think twice before I mention you in it!”

'Uncle' undergoes the same metamorphoses (дядя, дядичка, дядька, дядюшка, дяденька). But, in addition to it, *d'àd'ka*, corresponding to *t'ètka*, has stood throughout the last century for defining the inferior class of 'educators'—old, home-maid 'gouverneurs' whose business consisted in keeping their young gentlemen from extra mischief. Yet, being seldom able to uphold the authoritative-ness of their profession, the poor old 'uncles' (дядьки) have only succeeded in turning their professional epithet into a decidedly comical term. And, in addition to it, the young 'gents' in their charge would call them for their grumbling 'old horse-reddish'—старый хрѣнь—quite a national expression!

'Corn-  
flower'  
and 'Tom-  
cat.'

Various endings applied to some of the Christian names produce an unexpected effect; for instance— one of the shortened forms of the name *Vasili*

(*Basil*) is *Vasil'èk* (Василекъ): it sounds very gentle, and is at the same time the only name for the cornflower; but another short form of the same name, *Vas'ka* (Васька), is the name for every Tom-cat!

\* \* \* \* \*

The latest pearl in Russian literature is decidedly Gôr'ki's *Childhood*. In it he describes his early experiences in a dark corner of Russian life, amongst the industrial artisans at Nijniy Nòvgorod some forty years ago. That corner was full of 'leaden viles,' as he calls them.

A new  
pearl of  
Russian  
literature.

'It was that virile, mean truth which is not yet dead. That truth which should be exposed down to its roots in order to be pulled, with its roots, out of our memory, out of Man's soul, out of the whole of our hard and shameful life. . . . Although these viles are disgusting, and have crushed a number of beautiful hearts to death, yet the Russian is still so healthy and youthful in his spirit that he is overpowering them, and will finally overpower them. It is not only this which is extraordinary in our life—that the layer of beastly viles is so rich and so fertile—but also the fact that through this layer the Light, the Healthy and the Creative, still victoriously force their way and grow, good and humane.'

Even in this very corner of drunken cruelty, a whole world of the people's beautiful speech is

again revealed to us. Gòr'ki's own masterful chisel creates genuine Russian words at the need of the moment, and they correspond to the similar genuine art of his characters in beautiful harmony. Even before, Gòr'ki wrote in a style which was a fascination in itself even to those who were not carried away with his subjects. But his *Childhood* is acknowledged as his *chef-d'œuvre*. It is no wonder that *The English Review* hastened to produce some of it for the English public<sup>1</sup>; and also, it is by no means wonderful that the translator was obliged to leave out whole pages! As I have already mentioned, one feels grateful for this consideration on the part of the English translator towards Gòr'ki. If Gòr'ki does not know English, he must be surprised at these abbreviations; but if he does, he is sure to be thankful in his heart. Even comparatively small alterations hurt the eye and ear of a Russian who reads this translation. . . .

With the very first phrase of the book Gòr'ki plunges into the present tense, which obviously 'wouldn't do' in English (as it is replaced by the imperfect tense throughout):

'In a half-dark, shut-in room, on the floor near the window, lies my father, dressed in something white and extraordinarily long. The toes of his bare feet are strangely erect, the fingers of his

<sup>1</sup> It has been since published in book form.



caressive hands are folded on his chest, and are also crooked; his gay eyes are tightly covered with copper coins; the kind face is dark and frightens me with its uncanny grin.'

And so on. Gòr'ki keeps to the present tense for several pages, and they lose half of their graphic power in the quiet English past tense.

Here is one of the differences between our two languages: the present tense is decidedly our favourite. So much so that we sacrifice to this weakness even our grammar! If you want to give a vivid picture of what you have seen or heard, you invariably say it in this way:

The  
favourite  
Russian  
tense.

'Yesterday I walk along the street and I suddenly see——'

'Last week I meet So-and-So and I hear——'

'Three years ago I am crossing Europe on my way to England when I suddenly come across——'  
etc., etc.

We cannot help this form of narrative. It distinctly vivifies our speech. Of course, this theoretically-absurd combination of the past times with the present tense is not so striking when those times are not defined: thus, although the picture of Gòr'ki's dead father lying on the floor refers to some fifty years ago, the narrative runs smoothly, without mentioning the time at all—as if it were all happening now beneath the eyes of the reader—which is the purpose of the author and which

makes him instinctively apply the national style of telling a story.

\* \* \* \* \*

The  
keystone  
of the  
Russian  
grammar.

Now I would like to approach the keystone of the Russian grammar, namely, the all-important pliability of the verb, the psychological importance of which has been very subtly pointed out by Miss Harrison in her pamphlet, 'Russia and the Russian Verb.' This pliability does not find expression in a number of tenses; as it has been pointed out above, there is only one simple past tense and one future.<sup>1</sup> But there are *two different infinitives* to each verb, two different forms of the same conception, the choice of which depends on the presence or on the absence of the touch of the finality in what you want to say. Therefore they are distinguished as the Imperfective and the Perfective aspect. The most outstanding example will be the few verbs which alter entirely, *i.e.*, take the shape of a different word altogether, simply due to the Perfective, or the Imperfective nuance of the meaning, therefore still remaining as two aspects of the same word. Such is *to take*: the Imperative aspect is *brat'*, whilst the Perfective one is *vz'at'*. Now,

<sup>1</sup> And therefore there is no ordinary past participle; it exists only in a passive form (a book which is read, a letter which is written, a thing which is done); but nothing like 'I have *read*, I have *written*, I have *done*, he is *gone*, we have *told*, etc., etc. These cannot exist in Russian, simply because we have no complex pasttense.

where saying for instance, 'I don't want to take this from you, but I shall have to take it,' we use the Imperfective aspect of the infinitive *to take* (*brat'*) in the first half of this phrase, and the Perfective one (*vz'at'*) in the second. It would be absolutely wrong to use them the other way round, because *brat'* means taking in general, whilst *vz'at'* adds a tone of a decisive, final nature to the action. Exactly a similar couple of verbs are *lovit'* and *poymàt'*, the Imperfective and the Perfective form of 'to catch.' When someone has run away without leaving the least trace behind him we say '*Lovì* (catch) the wind in the field!' But when a thief is certain to be caught we say that it will be easy to *poymàt'* him.

A careful thought leads me to the remark that there exist one or two instances of a parallelism in English—allowing them, though, one point of great difference from the Russian, which I shall explain in a minute. You would say in English:

'To speak in Russian must be difficult: to say properly the word *Przemysl* alone is enough of a task!' I shall leave alone the fact that *Przemysl* is a Polish name, and that the Polish sound *prze* (pronounced *pshe*) turns always into a *pere* in Russian, with all letters pronounced like in Italian; we can easily pronounce the original Polish name but in Russian it is more known as *Peremysl*. But

just now I want to point out in the above example the English verbs 'to speak' and 'to say'; they represent almost exactly the two aspects of the same verb which they represent in Russian—for it is *one* conception, only treated in its Imperfective (to speak—*govorit'*) and in its Perfective (to say—*skazat'*) aspect. But the Russian mind drives the distinction between the two still further: we cannot imagine a verb in its Perfective form as having the present tense! 'I say' is perfectly correct English, whilst in Russian it is logically impossible. All verbs in their Perfective form mean an action which is either to be done (begun and finished)—expressed by the infinitive itself; or had been done (past tense), or will be done (future tense); it certainly also contains the imperative: have it done! But they never convey an idea of a lasting action and therefore could not possibly be expressed in the present tense: they simply have not got it.

The Russian Imperfective verbs mostly acquire their Perfective aspect through the addition of the syllables of nuances; thus, *chitát*' means to read in general, whilst *prochitát* means to have read a certain paper or book. (Those who know German will follow this if they can imagine the German past participle *gelesen*, *getahn*, turned into corresponding infinitive: *zu gelesen*, *zu getuhn*, etc., which do not exist in German.) But in Russian the addition of various syllables of nuances creates various Per-

fective verbs all belonging to the same Imperfective one, but each of them giving to it different shades. For instance:

*Imperfective aspect :*

To look—*smotr'èt'*.

*Perfective aspects :*

To have found out—*usmotr'èt'*.

To have observed secretly (say, through a key-hole)—*pod-smotr'èt'*.

To have looked through something — (peruse) — *p'er'esmotr'èt'*.

To have got accustomed to see something—*prismotr'ètsa*.

To be satiated with the sight of something—*nasmotr'ètsa*.

To have scrutinized something —*vsmotr'ètsa*.

But often the whole transformation of an Imperfective aspect into a Perfective one is created by the change of one syllable in the root of the verb itself or even of one vowel only: (*konchàt'*—*kònchit'*, to finish; *davàt*—*dat'*, to give; *brosàt'*—*bròsit'*, to throw; *kivàt'*—*kivnùt'*, to nod; *sverkàt'*—*sverknùt'*, to sparkle, etc.).

It may be not useless for those who might be interested in this point to see a few examples of the application of our Imperfective and Perfective aspects of the same verb and in the same tense.

*Imperfective aspects of various verbs.*

Now I want to read.

The Germans retired slowly.

*Perfective aspects of the same verbs.*

I want to read that new book of yours.

The Germans retired at last.

<i>I shall see</i> you often.	<i>I shall see</i> you to-morrow.
The allies <i>will not ruin</i> alien villages wantonly.	Germany <i>will eventually ruin</i> herself.
Do you want <i>to eat</i> ?	<i>I could eat</i> a whole joint !
<i>I went</i> to my work every day.	<i>I went</i> to my work yesterday for the first time.
<i>I loved</i> you—but all is over now.	<i>I loved</i> you from the first glance.
<i>I shall love</i> you for ever.	<i>I must not stay</i> near you any longer or <i>I shall love</i> you.

(In these last examples it is not 'to fall in love' that the verb stands for. To fall in love is expressed by yet another verb which has its two aspects like every other verb: *vl'ubl'atsa—vl'ubitsa*.)

As it will be, I hope, clear from the above, the Imperfective aspect expresses always a continuous state of action or feeling, and can be approximately translated by the English expression to be doing something or other;<sup>1</sup> whereas the Perfective one stands for an action or feeling connected with a certain limit of time—not necessarily stated. Again, I would like to point out that no parallel examples could be given in the present tense, because the latter exists in the Imperfective form only; there the choice is made once for ever, illustrating in itself the nuance of a lasting action, whilst the

<sup>1</sup> Also the English form of a past tense in a narrative, such as: He *would* get excited and *would* begin to speak loudly; but this *would* not last long, etc. Or: *He used* to come often and we *used* to have long talks—is expressed in Russian by the use of Imperfective verbs.

Perfective form is unthinkable in the present tense.

The subtlety of the Russian verb goes further still. Almost all the verbs indicating motion have *two different moulds for the Imperfective form alone*, besides the Perfective one. This is overlooked even in the Russian grammars and remains simply neglected; there is no fear of anyone using a wrong mould; each illiterate peasant and each child uses the right one in each given case. Therefore the omission in our school books is of no consequence to us. But to an educated person who is likely to approach the Russian language from without, this detail can be pointed out as the limit of analysis, and may also be of some help in his trying to find

*Last three lines on p. 167 and first four lines on p. 168.*

← This paragraph is nonsense. An exhaustive explanation can be found in Mr. Nevill Forbes's 'Second Russian Book.'

N. J.

The difference between these two Imperfective infinitives in each case is so subtle that it evades all explanation. But the second one in each pair

<i>I shall see you often.</i>	<i>I shall see you to-morrow.</i>
The allies <i>will not ruin</i> alien villages wantonly.	Germany <i>will eventually ruin</i> herself.
Do you want to eat?	<i>I could eat</i> a whole joint!
<i>I went to my work every day.</i>	<i>I went to my work yesterday for the first time.</i>
<i>I loved you—but all is over now.</i>	<i>I loved you from the first glance.</i>
<i>I shall love you for ever.</i>	<i>I must not stay near you any longer or I shall love you.</i>

(In these last examples it is not 'to fall in love' that the verb stands for. To fall in love is expressed by yet another verb which has its two aspects like every other verb: *vl'ubl'atsa—vl'ubitsa*.)

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... often  
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*The two Imperfective moulds of  
the Infinitive.*

To go (on foot)—	Hodit', idtì.
To go (in every way except on foot)—	Yèdit', yèhat'.
To carry—	Nosit', nestì.
To lead—	Vodit', vestì.
To drive (not the horses or motor, but passenger or load)—	Vozit', vezti.
To run—	B'ègat', b'èjàt'.
To fly—	L'ètàt', l'èt'èt'.
To creep—	Polzat', polzti.
To swim—	Plavat', p'lyt'.

The difference between these two Imperfective infinitives in each case is so subtle that it evades all explanation. But the second one in each pair

*acquires* by the addition of syllables of nuances *the nature of a Perfective* instantly, while the first one *remains Imperfective*, in spite of any of them!<sup>1</sup>

Now every one of the above-mentioned Imperfective forms can have as many as twelve different syllables of nuances joined on to it inseparably, which means a new word in each case, according to the need demanded by the different shades of the idea. Thus there are twenty-six differently shaped verbs (in their Infinitives alone) to *each* of the eight English ones just mentioned, and twenty-five to a number of other verbs.

There is another item which must seem sufficient to make any foreigner shun the Russian grammar; the verbal participle present (equal to the Latin gerund) has two tenses, past and present; thus 'in coming yesterday' is different from 'coming now,' which beats the Latin. While the adjective participle present (the coming man) winds its way not only through the two tenses, but also through three genders, two numbers, and six cases. . . .

<sup>1</sup> Thus *prihodit* remains Imperfective, while *pridit* is exclusively Perfective. *Unosit'* remains Imperfective, while *Unestì* becomes Perfective, etc. There is only one exception, and this is with the first verb of the whole group: the addition of the sound *s* (*s-hodit*) gives it two alternative different nuances. *S-hodit* may mean to descent (and then it remains Imperfective) or—to go to a certain destination, and return at once (and then it becomes Perfective).

Out of curiosity I wrote down all the differently shaped Russian words thus standing for the five English participles—going, coming, walking, driving, passing (which are used with different prepositions, but remain unchanged in themselves)—and counted them up: they are 1,664 in all!

And yet my English reader must not be alarmed; it *is* possible for him to learn Russian and to enjoy it.

There appeared lately a whole volume about the Russian verb in French; but I am afraid it is not clear enough. The numerous Russian examples are not even translated; and I think that no quotations from the best authors can help without a great deal of vivid and subtle explanation.

Indeed, it remains an unsolved problem to me—what should be brought forward as the ‘advance’ of a language. With all the old Slavonic elements left in ours, it seems to me to be extraordinarily extended, free in creative power, enjoying the endless subtlety of nuances, and thus exceedingly advanced in those very qualities, which make for the beauty and the usefulness of a language. Will my reader allow a graphic parallel between Russian and English? To my mind they bear the same relationship to one another as do clay and cement. The one pliable to any extent, the other—strong, but hard.

\* \* \* \* \*

The main part of our heroic epos, whether repeated or written, is given in the present tense. You can drop into it at any place of any of your narratives, too. A very popular modern novel is written in the present tense throughout its nine volumes—and the author makes you live in it. So here is already a big though seemingly inevitable drawback in the English version of Gòr'ki's *Childhood*. I would like to return to that book.

Another  
very  
Russian  
aspect  
of love.

The rays of love shining through its pages are different from those of Dostoyèvski's. They are equally Russian, but they emanate from types less complex. The wicked passions in the atmosphere of this book are unbridled and cruel in a more primitive way; but so are the joys. Everything is *haut-relief* without having the arabesques of refined complexity worked in their surface. And in the place of painful love 'with nadryv' (p. 150), like Kat'erina Ivanovna's, or Grushen'ka's (for the Pole who left her), we find here those rays of love which bring warmth and sunshine unmolested. Such is also the love of Dostoyèvski's Al'òsha, Idiot, and Zosìma; but then they are far from being simple natures, whereas Gòr'ki's Granny stands out as a nugget of gold in her joyful readiness for self-sacrifice and forgiveness, without a trace of nadryv in her heart: they are born in it as a matter of course. Her large, plump, round-backed figure, with an extraordinary

mass of jet-black hair falling down to her knees and her shining black eyes enwrapping you with an almost physical sensation of pulsating, boundless love, will, from now on, remain like another symbol of that only true joy—the joy of loving—given to humanity. Her funny appearance does not stand in the way. Her powerful spirit emanating it shines from every page of Gòr'ki's *Childhood*; and one likes to leave oneself exposed to those warmth-giving rays of Granny's, whether she is inspiring her grandchild with the beauties of ancient folklore, or abating the quarrels between her drunken sons, or 'swimming out' in a spontaneous dance. . . .

'Lord, Lord! . . . How beautiful everything is! . . . Just look round thee—how beautiful!'

'This was the cry of her heart,' says Gòr'ki—'the motto of all her life,' although even the boy himself was wondering what there was so beautiful in the appalling surroundings of their home?

An artistic vein was one of Granny's charms, which filled people's hearts with exaltation; and Gòr'ki's description of her spontaneous dancing in the hut at the dye-works will give perhaps a glimpse of her outstanding personality.

'Granny seemed to be not dancing, but telling a story. There she was, moving slowly, as if deep in thought, looking round from under her lifted elbow, her big body swaying hesitatingly, her feet cautiously feeling their way. Then she stopped,

as if frightened by something. A momentary wave of anxiety, of discontent, flashed across her features—and suddenly they were lit up again by her good, friendly<sup>1</sup> smile, as if she were greeting someone. She swayed to the side, seemingly making room for someone, bent her head, became quite still, as if listening to something, her smile growing brighter and brighter. . . . And suddenly—as if some power swept her off her feet—she plunged into wild dancing, like a hurricane! In an instant she became taller, slimmer, and it was quite impossible to take one's eyes off her.'

Granny  
and her  
God.

To judge by the simple manner in which Granny spoke to her little grandson, God seemed to be quite near to her life. Telling him about the cunning of her sons (each of whom was going to establish dye-works of their own and therefore wanted to lure the best workers from their father's establishment), she explained their tricks with perfect simplicity and chuckling gently:

'They only make God laugh at them!'

On another occasion, she tells her little friend and admirer, Gòr'ki, that she had had eighteen children born to her:

'Eighteen!' she repeated joyfully; 'they would have occupied a whole street full of houses if they had lived! I was married before I was fourteen,

<sup>1</sup> 'Caressive' smile is the usual Russian definition for a good smile, which stands in the original.

you see, and I bore the first child a year later. But God came to like my blood and kept taking my babies to join his angels. It was a pity, but it was joyful. . . . He took the best ones for Himself, and left me the worst ones. So I was very happy to adopt a foundling. I love you so, you little ones!

Her mind found a connection between God and her favourite horse, the mischievous, spoilt Sharàp, who would pretend to bite her shoulders with his white teeth, would drag the silk shawl off her head, and would look at her slyly, shaking the rime off his eyelashes, expecting to be treated by her to something which would please his sweet tooth.

'What, my child? What, kitten?' Granny would say to him, unharnessing him after his long run in the sledges—'up to mischief, art thou? Well, well, come on, God's toy!'

She would speak of her God even to cats and birds and trees and flowers; and believed that when 'wandering to see the sufferings,'<sup>1</sup> God's Mother visited all Russian provinces—her native R'azan', too.'

The nightly prayers of this Granny are exquisite! Gòr'ki says that, as a little boy of ten, he found it most interesting to listen to them. She would

<sup>1</sup> There is an akaphist in the Greek Church under this title, a poetic allegorical description of human sufferings and of how the Virgin wandered all over the world to see them and pleaded for the sufferers before God.

detail to God everything that had happened in the house during the day:

‘Thou knowest this Thyself, Lord, that everyone wants to get the best of everything. Well, that’s why Michael wants to remain at his father’s dye-works. Going over to the other side of the river to the new works he considers unfair to himself; the business over there is untested, the place is new. Meanwhile, his father<sup>1</sup> prefers Jacob to stay with him. Well, is it a nice thing to like one child more than another? The old man is obstinate—that’s what it is. Wouldst Thou not explain all that to him, O Lord? Send him a dream—such a one as he may understand how he should decide the business between his children.’

‘She bows to the earth,’ continues Gòr’ki, ‘knocks her brow against the bare floor, then, raising herself, again speaks in a persuasive tone full of meaning:

‘Wilt Thou not send some joy to Barbara? In what way has she made Thee angry? Why is she a greater sinner than the others? It won’t do: she is young, strong, yet has got to live in sadness. And, Lord, remember Gregory: his eyes are getting worse and worse. Why, if he goes finally blind, he will have to go a-begging—quite a wrong thing! He has wasted all his strength on grandfather, but grandfather won’t help, will he? . . . O Lord, Lord. . . .’

<sup>1</sup> Granny’s husband.



‘She remains silent for a while, obediently bending down, looking as if she were asleep or frozen, then—

‘What else?’ And she tries to think, knitting her enormous brows: ‘Have mercy, Lord, and save all orthodox people—me, too, the wretched fool that I am. Thou knowest, I sin not with wickedness, but because of my stupid brain!’ Finally she adds lovingly, with perfect satisfaction: ‘All is known to Thee, rodnòy. . . . Thou knowest everything, Bàt’ushka!’

By the way, the reader will see here that this special twist to the word ‘father’ (bàt’ushka, see p. 50) is applied by simple-minded people even in addressing God, as well as the favourite caressive adjective rodnòy (see p. 59).

Really and truly there exist no intonations in the English speech for such a prayer. It needs the nuances of a Russian voice, and *then* it may be appreciated even by a foreigner’s ear.

Nearly every morning Granny would find new words of touching admiration for the Virgin. . . . ‘Thou pure beauty, source of joy, heart of the heavens, dear golden Sun, blossoming apple-tree!’

No wonder a powerful creative impulse of speech was implanted in the young brain of her grandson, who grew up at her side during the impressionable years of his boyhood.

Grandfather’s God seemed to be of a different nature. Sometimes the old man used to come into

Granny's bedroom before she had finished her morning prayer. He would listen for a while, and, later on, grumble sarcastically:

'Haven't I taught you over and over again, you oak-head, how you should pray? But you keep to your own silly way like a heretic! I am astonished God can stand you.'

'He will understand,' Granny answered, with perfect, smiling conviction. 'He will make it out, whatever we tell Him.'

God was so near and human to her mind that once or twice, as the constant quarrelling between her old husband and his sons grew to an appalling extent, she even asked Him:

'Lord, Lord, has Thy clear mind failed Thee in the case of my children?'

And, in her usual talks with her grandson, she once thoughtfully remarked, helping herself from her snuff-box: 'Methinks, there may be cases when even He can't make out whose fault it is. He must be looking and looking down at the earth, watching us all, and at some odd moments He is sure to burst into sobs: "Men, men! My dear, beloved men! . . . How sorry I feel for you!" . . .' And she would shed tears, making that God of hers still nearer to the future author.

But that same dear old funny fat Granny was the same person who stopped the great disaster of the fire which broke out at the dye-works. Being

interrupted in the midst of her night prayers, she, nevertheless, never lost her presence of mind, and instinctively took charge of the whole business. She, herself, brought out of the flames a bottle of copper-sulphate with her own hands, and made everyone work likewise, at the same high pressure. When the fire was finally extinguished her husband was for once proud of her, and, stroking her big, round shoulder, said: 'Sometimes God is merciful to thee, and gives thee a great understanding for an hour or so.'

Recent letters from Russia describing the excellent work of the nimble, strong peasant women in our cornfields and hayfields—which they take as a matter of course—remind me of the praise on the part of this coarse man two generations ago. The attitude of the peasant men towards their women has entirely altered. Their efficiency is heartily appreciated, and men praise them nowadays in a way which is crisp and snappy:

Molod'ètz baba! <sup>1</sup> (See p. 42).

Or'èh bàba! Nut of a bàba!

Pùl'a bàba! Bullet of a bàba!

Ogòn' bàba! Fire of a bàba!

Bogatyr' bàba! (Bogatyr' being the Old Russian word for a hero, and meaning one 'rich of,' i.e., endowed with wonderful qualities. Nowadays the expression 'grey bogatyrì,' meaning modest bogatyrì, is frequently and lovingly applied to the Russian soldiers.)

Praise for  
the  
Russian  
bàba.

<sup>1</sup> In the case of an unmarried girl the word bàba is replaced by d'èvka (p. 41).

This point takes me back for a moment to Gòr'ki's Granny—it is very difficult to part with her! the only thing she was afraid of in the veritable hell of her husband's home was black beetles. She could discern the approach of one even at a distance, in the dark; and many a time her grandson had to get out of their bed at her ardent request, and creep about the floor on all fours, whilst she was waiting breathlessly with the blanket right over her head.

'Why art thou afraid of black beetles?' the boy would ask her.

And she would give the clear answer:

'Why, because I can't understand what they are made for. All they do is to creep, creep, creep—all over the place! Good God has given every moth its task; wood-louse is there to indicate that the place is damp; the bug to show that the walls are unclean; if lice attacks someone it means that he is going to be ill. Everything is clear, but these beasts—*tarakàny*—who can explain what kind of power there is within them, and what do they come for!'

In concluding my pages about Gòr'ki's speech and that of his characters, I must give the literal translation of some extracts from a book of his, so bold and natural in their definition. I wonder if they will find their way to the innermost hearing of my reader. . . .

'The stillness of the night stroked (my) heart with her warm, hairy hand. Somewhere flared up a human voice. Everything was lovingly intensified by the responsive silence. . . . A drunken shriek boiled up in the street.'

Or: 'The Works became sick of chewed people, and they flowed in a black stream through the opened black mouth (of the Works).<sup>1</sup> A white dishevelled wind (of a snow-storm) was flaring up and down the streets, driving the people into their houses.'

Or: 'Grandfather bristled with his golden hair and beard.'

And here is a paragraph in the words of the grandfather of Gòr'ki's, who was in his youth a *burlàk* on the Volga, towing with other harnessed men immense barges for thousands of miles against the current:

'One of the fellows would let his song come soaring out of his heart. The others would join in with him—and one suddenly felt as (one does when) the frost gives thee a good slap on the back—and the whole river seemed to flow faster and faster, as if it were going to rear and rise on its hind legs right up to the clouds!'

'What nonsense!' is very likely the impression of a literary English mind; but our peasant has

<sup>1</sup> The explanatory English words which are not needed in Russian are given in brackets.

The  
people's  
speech as  
presented  
by Gòr'ki.

boundless imagination, our writer a *carte blanche* for depicting it, and our reader the capacity for enjoying it.

\* \* \* \* \*

The evolu-  
tion of  
Dostoyèv-  
ski's out-  
look.

Dostoyèvski finally moulded his message to the world as he neared the end of his literary career which was really an incessant torment of inward searching. At its beginning, when his life was granted to him at the last moment on the scaffold platform,<sup>1</sup> and he was sent to the Siberian mines, his attitude towards life was a sweeping revolt against humanity and its destiny, as he then saw them. He lived through that period of spiritual despondency (*toskà*), which branched off into *Karamàzov shchina* (see p. 133):

‘Man loves destruction and chaos to the verge of passion. . . . Man needs exclusively the freedom of his own willing. . . . He will curse the whole world—which is his only prerogative amongst living creatures—and, doing so, he may perhaps achieve the consciousness of being more than a piano-key. . . . Life is pain, life is fear. . . . There can be no solving of problems, no final achievements for humanity, because these would mean the end of pain and of struggle which are man’s only reason for existence. Achievement would be like two and two makes four, and two

<sup>1</sup> He gives a marvellous description of these moments by the mouth of the ‘Idiot.’

and two makes four is certainly the beginning of death, *gospodà*, and is not life!

But the years in 'The House of the Dead' (Siberian miners' prison) and further insight into life have gradually brought the torture of Dostoyèvski's searching spirit to the conclusion that 'Man can love not welfare alone: he can equally love suffering.' . . . 'All that is left to man is to love his pain and his suffering.' Here is the gist of Dostoyèvski's religious mysticism on the waves of which he has finally launched his soul on its way to Eternity: the joy of suffering. Hence his characters throbbing with the reality of such joy: the Idiot, *Sòn'a Marmelàdova*—the Queen of Suffering—*Father Zosima*, *Al'òsha*, *Shàtov*. In them Dostoyèvski is essentially Russian.

In the first phase of his evolution—the one of burning revolt against the gloom of everything—he may be called the forerunner of Nietzsche. Nietzsche's ideas can be seen as though at the farther end of a telescope through the conviction of *Ivàn Karamàzov* that 'everything is permitted.'

Also through the striking pages of *Ivàn's* trying to explain to the idealist *Al'òsha* that no one has the right of being beautiful when all the world is drowned in filth. But in Nietzsche there are no traces of the extremely Russian childlike faith of *Dmìtri Karamàzov*, expressed in the lines: 'There (in prison) we shall rise up to joy, without

which neither man nor God can exist, because God gives joy, it is His prerogative. . . . We underground creatures, we shall sing glorious hymns to God from the bowels of the earth.'

Wholesale repudiation is as utterly Russian as this capacity for wholehearted mystic joy. Both result from passionate 'searching for Christ' and from the Russian incapacity for compromise. Even Smerd'akòv, a type of concentrated meanness, cunning and vulgarity, says: 'No one in our day can shove mountains into the sea—except perhaps some one man in the world or, at the most, two, and these most likely are saving their souls in secret somewhere in Egyptian desert.'

At this the old cynic Karamàzov cries in delight: 'Stay! so you do suppose that there are two who can move mountains? Ivàn, make a note of it: there you have the Russian all over.'

Again, Dostoyèvski's aristocratic atheist and individualist to the marrow of his bones declares: 'If Truth<sup>1</sup> existed outside Christ and not within Him, I would stand up by Christ and not by Truth.'

All this Russian mystical philosophizing, from the singing of hymns by the 'underground creatures' to the 'contemplating of precipices,' has been instinctively laid down by Dostoyèvski as the foundation-stone for all modern Russian phi-

<sup>1</sup> The Old Russian *istina* in this case—not *pràvda*.



losophy, poetry and religious aspirations. His titanic creative power is calling forth the innermost voices of revolt, of *nadryv* (see p. 150), and of religious individualism. All three are essentially national, and that is why the *zav'èty* of Dostoyèvski's go deeper with us than even Turgènev's and Tolstòy's. The literature of this century is throbbing with them. It is often called the literature of *podpòlye*—which is Dostoyèvski's title for one of his gloomiest creations saturated with despair. It has been translated as *Notes from the Underworld* and *Notes from the Cellarage*. Neither is quite correct. Both cellarage and underworld allow the conception of some sort of animal or vegetable life in them; but *podpòlye*—literally meaning under the floor—stands for depicting the state of mind and of breath, as it were, which would be the only possible one between the two layers of the floor, as floors are built in Russia. One can well imagine that state. Breathing in it would be unbearable torment physically; thinking—spiritually. Well, the works by the latest Russian authors really are unconscious seedlings of Dostoyèvski's first phase of evolution, when he felt himself in a *podpòlye* before arriving at an outlet by way of the joy of suffering. But what these modern authors write they write with the blood of their hearts. To quote a very lucky expression—'There is no bourgeoisie about the Russians' reli-

A dreary  
concep-  
tion.

Dosto-  
yèvski's  
influence  
on latest  
Russian  
literature.

gious aspirations.' The whole of Andrèyev's literary Self clings to the question once laid down by Dostoyèvski: 'Is it possible that I am created as I am, with the only aim of leading me to the conclusion that creating me was but a cheat?'

Andrèyev has come to the conclusion that there is no way out—nothing but a dead wall placed before him and the rest of humanity.

'Andrèyev ought not to be a writer,' says a prominent modern critic. 'A writer is a priest of art, and art's aim is to retouch, to paint, to screen life's cheating in most artful ways. That is why art is eternal: it will go on striving for its aim for ever without being able to attain it.'

From this point of view a group of the latest Russian writers are not artists at all! The idea which took even Dostoyèvski many pages of throbbing sentences is flung into the face of the content-and-sleek humanity in the one phrase of Andrèyev's prostitute:

'It is a shame to be good!'

Her life is an eternal mental agony which bars the whole world from her sight—and Andrèyev comes with her to the maddening conclusion that being pure, clean and good is a prerogative of only a few, and therefore they should not allow themselves that luxury. All must go to the fatal wall and be crushed against it.

'If there is no Paradise for every one, then I

reject it for myself. It would not be a paradise, but merely piggishness. . . . Come, relief and bliss of realized helplessness! Welcome, inevitable darkness, which will come to replace the deceit of life! Let us drink for the extinction of all lights! . . . Drink, Dark People,<sup>1</sup> drink for the Darkness to come to all alive! . . .'

Nothing could have a greater extinguishing power than such ideas, but the balance between them and 'the sleek majority' still rests: the world rolls on! And even the vehement Russians are not driven to wholesale self-extirpation by the fire of a genius of despair! One suffers for him, one admires his power of frankness and the spontaneity of his spiritual searchings—but they do not kill the second ingredient of a typical Russian mind: idealism. These two extremes must needs go together because they replace the balance of placidity.

It seems a relief to dwell for a while on the power of Andrèyev's speech alone. He is another eagle creating definitions with the beating of his wings. To quote a few lines of his:

'A whisper of silence penetrated to his brain. . . . Delighted Sleep grinned happily, placed his hairy cheek against his, gently put one arm round him and tickled his knees with his warm hand, then

<sup>1</sup> In the original 'dark people' are addressed as Darkness, which adds to the power of the phrase.

put his fluffy head on his breast. . . . Hairy Sleep gave a victorious whoop, embraced him in a hot embrace and, in deep silence, with abated breath, they floated out into the bottomless, transparent depths. . . . There was the emptiness of eternity.'

Dostoyèvski's love of suffering is absent from the minds of younger writers, and therefore they do not conquer our hearts altogether. They are priests only of the dark altar of Seeking.

Feodor  
Sologùb—  
the  
admirer  
of death.

Feodor Sologùb finds his religion in Death. She stands sweet before him as the only clear goal and solution, the only entity that can be achieved and the only knowledge. This religion permeates the whole of Sologùb's creations. He makes Death the only beauty—and succeeds in giving her a fascination. The sweet triolettes about 'beloved north, beloved rain!' given in this book (p. 93) are his. It suffices a Russian to repeat these lines to himself, giving him a chance to visualize them—and he begins to feel as if the sighing moss, the rain and the dripping, trembling birches were really the most loveable of all Nature's charms.

But Sologùb goes much further than Gògol' and Chèhov in his love of sadness. There is a sweeping gloom about Sologùb's philosophy:

'The imperfection of human nature has caused the mixing in one goblet of the sweetest joys of love with the base fascination of lust and thus has

poisoned the drink of life with shame and pain—and with the longing for shame and pain.' He cuts the knot by worshipping death, but this philosophy is not typically Russian. It is only his freedom of deciding for himself on an individualistic religion which is Russian indeed.

As compared to the rejection of everything, a much more universal and instinctively beloved sacrament of the Russian soul is confession: *pokayàniye*. We don't necessarily mean by this definition a confession of one certain crime, but the readiness to admit all one's faults and evil thoughts altogether—the absence of shame in doing so and the willingness to be scrutinized and judged by others. The best illustration of this psychological point is the Russian word for good-bye. It literally means—forgive me, and nothing else but forgive me. In one of the aspects of the verb it is *prost'ì* or *prost'it'e* (singular or plural), and in the other *proshchày* or *proshchàyt'e* (singular or plural). The so-called lower classes invariably use this expression for good-bye when parting from their beloved ones, from their parents or masters, or even from their helpers. It sounds grave and elating, in spite of its seemingly humiliating nature. Russians put quite a different note into their voices compared to the English when they say good-bye—whether it is *prost'it'e* or *proshchàyt'e*. It is much more serious; and people involuntarily use the first,

A typical sacrament.

The true meaning of good-bye.

being the gravest of the two forms, when the circumstances are in the least grave. The departing cook or nurse, whether she feels herself in the wrong or not, will usually say to her mistress, 'prost'it'e, bàryn'a.' The 'prost'i, bàt'ushka bàrin'<sup>1</sup> is altogether devoid of its nature in 'Good-bye, sir': in Russian it is extremely natural in its affectionate patriarchal tone.<sup>2</sup> To this is very often added—between equals, too—another typical expression: *N'e pominàyt'e lihom!*—which means 'Don't remember me by the wrong I have done you.' Man and woman at the moment of parting after years of mutually painful intimacy and misunderstandings are sure to tell each other with a feeling of gratitude for what there had been beautiful between them and with a feeling of sorrow for having hurt each other: 'Prost'i! N'e pominàyt' lihom!'

The youngest of Alexander II.'s assassins, a fellow of nineteen, when being driven to the place of execution, stood up on the dreary and clattering high vehicle and, moving along the streets of Petrograd, bowed low to the crowds many a time, repeating: 'Prost'it'e!' It instinctively combines a final good-bye with a pleading for forgiveness. That is why we more often say at an ordinary parting, *do-svidànya*, au revoir, than *proshchàyt'e*. The distinction here is still more acute than between

<sup>1</sup> See p. 50.

<sup>2</sup> Literally: Forgive, mistress. Forgive, father-master.

the French *au revoir* and *adieu*: there is little hope of seeing each other again in the word *proshchàyt'e*.

The usual reply amongst the peasantry (and on grave occasions amongst all classes of Russians) to the *prost'ì* said at parting is—*Bog prost'it* = God will forgive you! Here again is the typical abstinence from passing judgment on other people. Even when asked for forgiveness the Russian doesn't consider himself in the right to judge another at all; and this truly national answer means: God will forgive you: it is not my business to judge even in the case of your having done me harm.

I wonder whether I have made it clear that there is no humiliation in all this, but rather a quiet courage of admitting one's unavoidable demerits and mistakes. There is something characteristically breezy about the Russian psychology; alongside with this modest demand *prost'it'e* there exists a definition which is perhaps the most striking of all: it is *lihòy* (adjective), and *liho* (adverb), which are never conveyed in the translations by anything approaching them: nothing under a whole explanatory sentence could convey the distinct, sharp outlines of this most Russian definition. In South-Russian the noun *liho* means wrong or misfortune; in Russian proper it is not in use now, although originally it also must have stood for 'wrong' pure and simple. But the point is, that

A praise  
for one's  
foes.

at some time in the depth of the ages the adjective deriving from that noun, *lihòy*, has acquired an additional meaning: the latter stands for the acknowledgment of elegance and smartness in inflicting wrong—of a courageous way of doing harm! It is really a praise for those who are doing cruel things brilliantly, although with the intention of harming you. . . . There the foreign writers who like to speak of Russia with their hands clasped piously are bound to shut their eyes and ears: there is much in the Russians beyond their mysticism and even beyond the human warmth of heart; it is just this complexity that makes them interesting, because the complexity itself comes from the gift of seeing things from ever so many points of view. To those who really know them, the Russians are much more interesting than they appear in Mr. Stephen Graham's descriptions. He profoundly admires them, but his point of view is growing narrower and narrower with each of his books. I have heard many Russians who have read them apply to him, with good-natured condescension, our adjective *pr'amolinèyny* — which means 'running along as straight as a straight line'; it does not imply the idea of deep, many-sided observation.

Yes, *lihòy* is an essentially Russian epithet, and a most breezy one too! It makes you visualize a foe whose art commands involuntary admiration—



*lihòy vrag* (*vrag*=foe). With the *kazàki* (=cosacks), it is a fine praise: it is the ambition of every one of them to be a *lihòy kazàk*; and the combination of these two words instantly draws a picture of a slim, wiry figure on horseback, as if chiselled with his animal out of one piece of steel—one who will not be moved either in warfare nor in less dignified forms of struggle (the latter of which, we hope, will never take place again! . . .). But there is a distinct touch of something aboriginally-poetical, aboriginally-handsome in this praise for a war-like attitude, and probably this is the reason why I have not once come across the epithet *lihòy* attached to 'a German' (*n'èmetz*) as yet, in spite of the very richly coloured, very local and very national Russian war-literature: somehow the Germans, as a foe, do not call forth ancient poetical conceptions—even in inflicting wrong!

With a shade of bitterness added to it, the same adjective is applied to merciless Fate—*lihàya sud'ba* (*fem.*); or to a brilliantly executed (!) cruel act—*lihòye d'èlo*: again there must be the element of aboriginal daring in it, pure and simple, to make that brilliancy fall under this definition; for instance a murder or a pillage, when no traces of the criminals can be found. This reminds me, by the way, of another expression defining the art in crime, however horrible that sounds! It refers solely to those wicked deeds, the authors of

which cannot be found out, despite any research and investigation; in such instances one says: *tut komàr nòsa n'e podtòchit!* It means—'there is nothing here on which a gnat could sharpen his nose!' *i.e.*, not even a weeniest thing that would show itself on the beautifully-smooth surface.

The adverb *liho* goes mainly with the 'diablem'emporte' kind of manners, conveying the idea of a smart dash-and-go before anything else; for instance, to sing *liho* means to sing so that everyone is bound to listen—whether one wants it or not; *liho skàchet troyka* means—a *tròyka* is flying headlong in a magnificent way . . . and the footgoers should look out sharp!

The same adverb is gaily applied in homely matters: a bright Russian fellow, brimming over with un-used strength and ready to challenge laughingly the whole of the world, is very much apt to shift his cap to the back of his head, sideways: this, combined with his mood reflected on his young face, and with the front tufts of his hair sticking out from under the cap with that same roguish challenge, sends for a second through the mind of those who meet him, the expression: *shàpka liho na-b'ekr'èn'!* There is no verb in it, only the noun *shàpka* (=cap), and two adverbs which must need go together on this occasion, because the *liho* means the very spirit with which a fellow would shift his cap *na-b'ekr'èn'* (=hat

a-cock): you wouldn't do it unless you felt lïho, would you ?

We meet lots of them who do, in our town and country.

\* \* \* \* \*

Before finishing with the dark colours in the writings of our youngest authors, I must mention Zinaïda Gippius. This woman certainly has a more marked stamp of a genius on her brow than any of the other modern writers. Despite her un-Russian name, she was born for that Russian vehemence which brings her, alas, nothing but pain. The brightest of all her poems is the one previously mentioned (p. 111), 'Russia speaking to her Singer.' It is not only quaintly poetic in its form, but typical in its spirit, akin to Dostoyèvski's spirit:

The mystic  
woman-  
poet.

' Who will love my sins all-forgivingly ? . . .  
Love the tall weeds alongside my walls,  
Love my poor drunken peasant !'

But it is her uncanny nationalism which makes her speak thus; here she yields herself wholly to her love of country, almost uncanny in its intensity; because her general attitude towards humanity's existence in this planet is all-round helplessness and condemnation itself.

I feel inclined to startle my reader straight away by a literal translation of the most extraordinary of her poems—'Reality'; in other verses of hers he will undoubtedly trace what is called a poetic

vein, while 'Reality,' I think, would be called a poem nowhere on earth except in Russia! It needs the Russian passion for exploring the new; and fear of novelty is the last thing that could be expected from Zinaïda Gippius.

An extraordinary poem.

REALITY.

Sticky and filthy, fraudulent, horrible,  
 Densely-stupid, ghastly, terrible,  
 Slowly-cruel, void of honesty,  
 Shameless, slippery, mean and stifling,  
 Shamming happiness, hiding misery,  
 Vulgar, hollow, sensual, cowardly,  
 Sodden and stagnant, slimy and obstinate,  
 Death or life undeserving equally,  
 Slavish, contemptible, dreary, decaying,  
 Glutinous, selfish, infernal, monotonous,  
 Still in its impudence, dismal in quietness,  
 Sleepily-heavy, wickedly artful,  
 Cold like a corpse, worse than nonentity,  
 Worse than unbearable—false—false—deceitful!

With an impressionable mind it may bring one to the verge of wiping cold perspiration off one's brow! And it does now and again—with the Russians. But I am not anxious about my English reader. He will either laugh or pucker his nose.

I here feel tempted to ask a solution to the problem—Why do the English find a 'charm' in the Russians? Our ever-searching, ever-analyzing national character, 'sadness which is joy,' joy which is exaltation, burning the candle at both ends—and melting it in the middle, ever longing

for prostòr, headlong plunging into Karamàzov-shchina including both torment through God and torment through no God—all this must be perfectly strange to the well-balanced British mind. But it is possible that while you outwardly apply the epithet ‘charming’ you inwardly substitute for it ‘amusing’? . . . .

N’ichevò! This does not hurt us. We make sincere friends all the same, wherever we meet something rodnòye (p. 59) in the English.

I wonder whether a picture of the slowly-falling masses of snow, and its impression on Zinaïda Gippius, will attract those who are used to the everlasting green grass of this snug little island:

## SNOW.

Snow-the-wonderful.

Again it falls, miraculous and silent,  
Soaring, circling, settling gently down. . . .  
Its painless fall delights my thirsting spirit,  
It comes reborn of nothing, to exist awhile.

It re-appears, a stranger sweet as ever,  
Oblivious and tempting in its cold.  
I always wait for it—expecting miracles,  
I feel it near to me, akin in unity.

It will depart, entrancing, soundless, stealthy;  
Its loss does not depress me: as before  
I’ll wait. . . . I love thy touch, my gentle one,  
My only one, my longed-for!

And still it falls—soft, powerful, unhurried,  
Its conquest filling me with boundless pride.  
Of all the mysteries of earth, thou, Snow the wonderful,  
It’s thee I love, thou Master of my mind!

There are not many people who are disturbed by the stillness of a moonlit night, but it invariably upsets our woman poet. My object being to convey as clearly as possible the psychological keys of the Russian speech, I hope the English reader will allow me another one or two close translations of her poems—in spite of their lack of classical English; I can follow only the sense and the rhythm—the lilt.

‘What is  
lacking in  
the moon-  
light?’

What is lacking in the moonlight,  
In that dim-blue midnight secret?  
In the stringless, silent music,  
In the sparkling shine of desert?  
Gazing at it leaves me longing,  
Love in moonlight does not soothe me,  
Beams of moonlight sting acutely,  
Hurt so coldly, ever wronging.  
'Midst the rays of shining power  
I am powerless and dying. . . .  
Oh, if wings could grow from moonlight  
That I could go flying—flying! . . .

The Russian language allows a repetition of the words freely. The English reader must have noticed it in the everyday speech of Dostoyèvski's characters. True, with him they repeat more than a Russian under ordinary circumstances does. But then, you cannot meet whole families composed of—or whole drawing-rooms filled with—Dostoyèvski's people. In the Russian original, they speak still more intensely than even the repetition of English words and sentences can convey: because we have several conjunctions quite unknown

Abundance  
of con-  
junctions.

in the English speech, which carry half shades of meaning (for instance, *a*, which is *exactly half-way* between the meaning of the 'and' and of the 'but'; also *vpròchem*, *v'èd'*, *odnàko*, *ràzv'e*—which do not exist in English at all, and are always translated as the same old 'but'! Also a number of what we call particles, one-syllable little bits of words, which serve the same purpose.<sup>1</sup> They all come in with the repetition of words constantly, and the difference they make can be here explained only graphically. When the English translator is reduced to repeating, 'But you thought so? You thought so?' the Russians, and especially Dostoyèvski's and Andréyev's Russians, say: 'But you thought so? *V'ed'* you thought *je* so *odnàko*?'

All these *je*, *da*, *to*, *li*, *by*, *v'ed'*, *a*, *d'e*, *an*, *chay*, *znay* give whole chords of colour in Russian, suggesting doubt, obstinacy, sarcasm, conviction, etc., on the part of the speaker—which are not depicted in any other words and therefore, meeting no equivalents in English, inevitably remain untranslatable.

Without dwelling on this additional technical difference, I just want to point out the manner of mere repetition of words, which does not actually emphasize or twist their meaning, but adds quaint

<sup>1</sup> They exist to some extent in Greek, as well as some parallels to our syllables of nuances.





this very responsiveness and exuberance of vitality. Even Dostoyèvski's love for the 'underground creatures' and an atheist's tenderness for 'the sticky little leaves in the spring,' as well as Son'a's ardent desire that the man whom she loves should go out on a crossing and kneel and kiss the earth which he had insulted by his crime and confess about it aloud—even these sad passions result from breadth of spirit. It is this breadth which has created the expressions *prostòr*, *razdòlye*, *razmàh*, *ùdal'*! (pp. 25, 70, 71) . . . Openness! Freedom! Not in the name of narrow personal comfort, but in the name of acknowledging each of one's aspirations without shrinking, without shirking, without fear of ridicule, without false shame. The mind of our modern writers mostly finds its way into the darkest corners of reality. They see very few rays of light in this world. They are trying to reach unreachable depths and heights. After speaking about them an average Russian feels inclined to take a deep breath of fresh air, to stretch out his arms and to call up in his memory the visions of Gògol's *Tròyka*, Gòr'ki's *Granny*, Al'osha's and the *Idiot's* lovable personalities, Chèhov's *Monk*, Tolstòy's *Pèt'a* and *Natàsha* and the soldier *Platòn Karavàyevev*, Alexèy Tolstòy's foaming sea, Igor' Sever'ànin's 'halcyon day of spring'—well, even the folk-lore heroes standing out in the fascinating vigour of their

primitive 'dear strength' (the absolutely untranslatable *silushka bogatyrskaya*), etc., etc.

Some  
hopeful  
thoughts.

It is all these which keep unwavering one's trust in Russia's future: not Andrèyev's kind of dead-wall future, but the future in which there will be room for sadness and even for joy or suffering—because the effects of a sad history cannot be finally effaced—but which will throw open wider than ever Russia's gates to the innate power of loving, the freedom of thinking and the sense of art. These have come up intact from the depth of aboriginal national spirit. The sense of art is a plant that has been growing uninterruptedly from the heart of the Russian soil. Its bloom is rich. And amongst its daintiest flowers is the one which seldom stands plucking and cannot live in any atmosphere except its own without losing its fragrance: and this is the Russian speech.

\* \* \* \* \*

A  
suggestive  
parallel.

The other day we were discussing the Russian language with Mr. Nevill Forbes, who knows it wonderfully well—the only Englishman, in my knowledge, who is actually able to appreciate 'the flavour and luxury of the Old Slavonicisms in it,' to use his own expression.

'It is certainly more *magnificent* than English,' said he, and added: 'I should say, the difference between the two is like that between the robes

of a Russian Bishop and those of an English Bishop !'

This was a witty remark. But, being Russian, I feel inclined, for justice sake, to dwell for a moment on that lucky comparison.

It is not only the robes of our Bishops. . . . However agnostic or atheistic we may feel, the scene surrounding the Bishop, or even the look of a small log-built church in the course of a service, makes a quaint impression on us. I am not talking of any religious élan—or of the moral influence of our clergy! Far from that. . . . But, once that the outer appearance of a Russian Bishop (as compared to an English one) is taken as an item to convey the idea of Russian language (as compared to the English) graphically, I want to be fair and to include in the comparison the surrounding atmosphere as well. In every church, at every service (except in Lent) the Russian clergy's robes are of that same gorgeous style as those of a Bishop's, only on a smaller scale. Very well—they stand for the 'flavour and luxury' of our language. But the long-haired and golden-robed priest is surrounded by a crowd of naïve, childlike believers, who do not all sit down or all kneel at the same time (in fact, they never sit because there are no seats in the Russian churches at all), or all read from the same prayer-books (because prayer-books are not brought to

church in Russia), or all sing (because there is always a choir of nice voices only), but who represent a rare picture of frank individualism and absence of self-consciousness. Everyone prays as his own heart dictates him at the moment—some kneeling a long, long time, some remaining standing, with their look fixed on the golden gate shielding the altar and, probably, unaware of anything around them; others, again, involuntarily yawning with (perhaps permissible) fatigue—but hastening to cross themselves vigorously and to make several ‘earth-bows’ (touching the ground with their foreheads) to make up for their weakness! . . . And on various occasions—hundreds of little wax-tapers flickering in the hands of the people in that motley crowd where everyone finds various ways for self-expression—including a frank knock on a neighbour’s back, with a one-farthing-taper and a message finding its way from the back of the crowd—to light it at the altar’s gate ‘To Nicholas the Wonderworker who pleases God.’ The Saint gets it duly, together with the firm belief of those present that their little lights will eventually lead them to the gates of Heaven.

Well, if they don’t, they certainly envelop the crowd in a warm glow. And, to my mind, the distinct touch of this warm, picturesque light enwrapping the scene forms the other half of the graphic parallel: the warmth and ‘caressiveness’

of the Russian speech (it is impossible to do without this word when speaking about Russia!) is not one atom less characteristic of it than its magnificence. And, gladly accepting the graphic comparison of the two Bishops' robes, I only want to add the comparison of the above-described scene in a Russian church to the one of an English congregation. However great and deep the religious mood of the latter may be, there is no visible medium for individual self-expression about it: everyone is doing exactly what everyone else does, beginning and ending at the same time—whether it is kneeling, sitting, singing or saying a prayer.

'When is the time for them to say their own prayers?' seriously asked me once a simple, religious Russian woman, obviously finding that there was no chance to pray 'in freedom, inwardly,' as her own heart was longing to. A religious Russian needs the atmosphere of the church, but he prays in it independently.

Well, in my picture of comparison (not so far-fetched as it may seem at the first glance) the individual self-expression with a Russian crowd at prayer stands for the freedom with which thousands of Russian words adopt various forms according to the speaker's mood at the given moment; while the thousands of little lights glowing everywhere in the hands of that crowd correspond to those innumerable words of appre-

ciation, encouragement, sympathy, forgiveness, spiritual caress, love and tenderness with which the Russian language is lit up so warmly, so beautifully . . . and so untranslatably!

\* \* \* \* \*

When English people say in a tone of modest dignity that they 'do not wear their hearts on their sleeves,'—it always strikes us for a second that we are horrid people who do so! . . . But another moment—and the real point reveals itself to our mind: a conscientious effort of self-analysis brings with it the revelation that—we don't wear our hearts on our sleeves either! But, that some power, without asking our permission, has concealed little X-ray cameras just against our hearts. . . .

No senti-  
mentality  
—either in  
religion  
or love.

This reminds me of a review of Mr. Stephen Graham's book *The Way of Martha and the Way of Mary*. The critic<sup>1</sup> finds that 'Mr. Stephen Graham in recent years has taken himself over-seriously as an interpreter of Russia to Western Europe'; and says that 'the Russians we find in Mr. Stephen Graham's book are absolutely unlike the Russians that we find in Chèhov, Turgènev, Tolstòy and Dostoyèvski. . . . They are sentimentalized out of all life-likeness.'

I can only back up the critic. He sees the Russians better than Mr. Stephen Graham does—because the latter hardly allows us any sense of

<sup>1</sup> *Daily News*, January 3, 1916.

humour. It would be a quaint revelation to him if he realized some day that the Russians . . . do not seem to appreciate his love for them. Even his call 'Love Russia!' makes them smile. Both in private correspondence and in the best liberal Press coming from Russia I can see this ungratefulness leaking out.<sup>1</sup> The overwhelming majority of Russians are unable to appreciate Mr. Graham's somewhat strange though sincere manner of burning incense to their goodness. After all we are but ordinary mortals! However different national characters may be, we have not grown more than other nationalities out of the natural human habit of being human—just human; and being 'sentimentalized out of all life-likeness' calls forth our sense of humour. If we are permitted to know ourselves a little better than the most ardent foreign admirer of Russia does, I would like to point out that the 'warmth' taking such a large part in Russian life and speech does not kill the sense of humour at all! I would like to speak up just for that sense of humour rather innate in the Russians, in the place of sentimentality with which Mr. Graham—perhaps unconsciously—endows us.

However much warmth there is in a Russian and in his speech, this warmth is ever so far from the superficial, shallow nature of sentimentality. The

<sup>1</sup> See *The Times Literary Supplement*, March 16, 1916.

absence of the latter ought to be clear from that word *bat'ushka* alone, which, perhaps, Mr. Graham also understands as 'little father' (at least I never heard of an explanation of this common misunderstanding from his pen). I tried my best to show in due place how detestably-sickly this manner of translating the fine Old Russian grave and serious manner of addressing sounds to us. Only those Russians who have no 'sense of languages' at all and don't trouble about the exact meaning of words (there are some Russians of this kind too!) can light-heartedly consent to this interpretation—so unfortunately established.

One cannot even imagine the two Russian words for 'little father' ever pronounced in our land at all! They would be 'mà'en'ki ot'ètz' or 'mà'enki bàt'ushka'—and would sound absurd! The combining of this particular noun with this particular adjective is absolutely unthinkable; it could not be borne by a Russian mind.

What is more, shoulder to shoulder with 'bàt'ushka' stands its variety 'bàt'ka'—and everyone who has lived in Russia ought to know what a delightful couple these two make! In order to be short and clear I will invite my reader for a moment back again to the little village church. . . . It is not unlikely that the wretched old priest had a little too much just before the service. Well, in that case more than one amongst his



congregation will smile to himself and say: 'Oho! Bat'ka is a bit tovò (a bit of that)!' Not for a second would the *usual* manner of addressing a priest (bàt'ushka) come into a Russian's mind on such an occasion: it would be *bàt'ka*—unless it is merely *pop!*

I think, that *bàt'ushka* and *bàt'ka*, coming from one root, are excellent in depicting the contrasting proximity of seriousness and humour. But both of them are miles away from sentimentality. A little peasant fellow who had just had a spanking from his father (which is not common amongst the peasantry and quite absent with the educated classes) will explain the richness of his complexion to a sympathetically-inquisitive comrade in two words: 'Bàt'ka pr'ib'il.'<sup>1</sup> Calling his father by this word *bàt'ka* instead of *ot'ètz*, or *bàt'ushka*, or *t'at'ka* (all standing for 'father' in a nice way), he will thus express his attitude at the given moment: namely, one of criticism, but at the same time one which it is not worth while dwelling upon. The peasant's criticism passed on his spiritual father's weakness is of the same nature: the next moment he will be deep in his mood of devotional worship—far from being formal or perfunctory, but in free accord with what he feels moved to do—and not thinking of the priest's lack of dignity at all. There is no decorum in

<sup>1</sup> —has beaten me.

the attitude of our peasantry towards their priesthood: if there were any, the funny everyday word *pop* (for priest) would never have come into being. Both in *pop* and in *bat'ka* there is a world of humour. What is more, a demure, funny little priest would be called *pòpik*, which is the quintessence of good-natured fun!

That is just the case: we laugh on many occasions where Mr. Graham probably does not want to see us laughing; consequently he ignores certain points of Russian life. The comic element when observed in the sphere of orthodoxy and 'holiness' is with us a perfectly natural target for fun.

If you only could read in original the untranslatable *Sobor'àn'e* (The Cathedral-ians) by L'eskòv—what a wealth of that very Russian humour which goes hand in hand with good-natured forgiveness! Again, Chèhov's tenderness for the failures of mankind: isn't it interwoven with humour—now subtle, now farcically-naked—which means a fearless openness of good heart? Is it anywhere near sentimentality?

Why, even the vague English definition 'lovers' could be sooner related to sentimentality than our most decisive denomination (*l'ubòvniki*) which draws a circle round the word for lovers (see pp. 15, 16) leaving no room for the question what sort of lovers they may be. Passion is certainly understood by this term; but no sentimental parading. If there is any 'display' about

it—say, in a man's going with his secret lover to the stalls of the Opera House pretending to be her ordinary acquaintance or a stranger—then there is challenge and humour in it, but no desire to be sweetly called 'lovers' by grannies and school-girls. His friends who know about his *uvlechèniye* (see p. 124) will express their understanding without words and will enjoy the situation as one of buoyant humour, feeling themselves a kind of conspirators. This touch is not comparable with the atmosphere of the English morals, visible or concealed, just as 'popik' and 'bàt'ka' are not comparable with 'our vicar'—and as the two languages are not really comparable in their whole. The lack of common denominator in each of these spheres is striking.

So it is with regard to cases of profound emotions. The times, when Vronskl's appearance in a theatre box with Anna Kar'èniina *whom he regarded as his wife* was taken as impudence, are gone now. Russia has been developing since then—in every way but one. . . . Only the sphere of home politics A little digression. in Russian life is rather unlike the others, and the road along it is somewhat barricaded in spite of the progress on its right and left. But we, true to our cherished dreams, still hope that the war will automatically overthrow this striking inconsistency.

But this one particular sphere of our dreams can hardly be called sentimental: there is an element

of tragedy in it; and the absence of humour in this case is *rather* pardonable.

Elsewhere, deepest emotions don't exclude a smile with the Russians. An old, essentially Russian exclamation in the form of an address is a typical illustration: 'Eh, thou, gòr'e-bogatyr'! . . . Bogatyr' is an old word for a hero richly endowed with victorious spiritual and physical power; while gòre means grief, disaster; combining the two seemingly incommensurable conceptions and throwing them at a fellow without any further comment carries with it a world of sympathy (for some reckless, fruitless effort) combined with a smile. Don Quixote was a real *gòr'e-bogatyr'*!

Russia would not have produced the genius of Gògol' and of Ostròvski if this laughter through tears were not innate in her very blood.

The presence of a snap-jack in Russian life.

A 'snap-jack' is to a sunlit room what humour is to Russian tenderness. (I vainly asked a number of my friends what is the English word for the little patch of brilliant light which one sends fluttering about the room in one's childhood by means of reflecting sun-rays on a piece of broken looking-glass; no one could tell me. At last I got the 'snap-jack,' without a moment's hesitation, from a dear village landlady who commands an extraordinary vocabulary. It sounds most appropriate!) That is why we do not quite recognize

ourselves in the paintings by Mr. Stephen Graham: there is much colour in them, but the room is too hot and there is no 'snap-jack' in it!

Therefore I am very anxious that the reader of this book educated on such representations should not draw a final vision of the Russians exclusively with the help of their lovable and caressive terms discussed in its pages. They are not 'pretty'—these terms! You must not call them so. For one thing, we have no word for 'prettiness.' The adjective 'pretty' we have (*horòshen'ki*), and we apply it to pretty women's faces, their frocks and hats, to knick-knacks, to jewellery, to small gardens, small houses, small animals. But we have no word for prettiness. And it would never occur to us to call the words *bogatyr'*, *chùtki*, *làskovost'*, *rodnòy*, *prostòr*, *razdòlye*, *prost'it'e*, *bat'ushka*, etc.<sup>1</sup> 'pretty' words. They are beautiful, because their meaning is deep. Nor are *pop*, or *bàt'ka*, or *bàba*, or *sapojlshche*, or *mozgl'àven'ki*<sup>2</sup> pretty, either! If I add just one more word to the last set, my idea can be conveyed in a characteristic saying: this word is *popadyà*, and means the pop's wife<sup>3</sup>; and the saying (applied when one is talking about the variety of tastes in this world) runs: 'Some like the pop, some—

<sup>1</sup> See pp. 18, 23, 25, 50, 168, 179.

<sup>2</sup> See pp. 126, 141, 149, 199.

<sup>3</sup> I expect my reader knows that a man cannot take holy orders in Russia without being married.

popadyà, and some—the tail of piggy!’ Or, here is a variety: ‘Some like a melon, some—watermelon, and some—the pop’s daughter!’<sup>1</sup>

Those Russian hearts can also be bursting with ‘naughty’ fun; we have no word for ‘naughty,’ but I think we understand its English shades of meaning; we find it too much rubbed into the astonishingly well-trained babies of this country, while the facial expression usually accompanying this blame when it is addressed to ‘grown-ups’—makes us smile! They can be very furious, those Russian hearts; very indignant, burning with hatred, wicked, wilful, nonchalant; even cruel—on the one cumbered road. . . . But the X-rays go on doing their work on all these occasions just the same! And this is the most characteristic feature about the Russians.

\* \* \* \* \*

Final dig  
at English.

I would not like my reader to run away with the idea that I am unaware of all the scientific arguments which philologists can hurl at me. I think I know most of them, and I would like my reader to know what I think of them.

The main argument will be, that all this flexibility of words which we enjoy so much is merely an evidence of the primitive stage in the development of our language; that other languages had it

<sup>1</sup> Кто попá, кто попадью, а кто свиной хвостикъ!  
Кто любить дыню, кто арбузь, а кто попову дочку!

once upon a time all these eloquent terminations and twists to the words—but have dropped them as an unnecessary ballast. Then they will say that it is easier to learn the English, freed from that ballast, than any other language; and that this is, after all, the all-important advantage—making the English speech attractive to a number of nations on this globe.

Well, I quite agree that the purely grammatical terminations can be called a ballast; and perhaps we would not notice or mind if they withered gradually and fell off one by one—leaving four out of the thirty-two terminations to a verb's stem. But when my English critics tell me that a selection of precise adjective epithets works just as well as a special twist given to the noun itself in order to illustrate the speaker's attitude, I find it a little inconsequent: it is not in accord with the general *English power through brevity*. When people complain 'I have no time!'—and a wonderful friend of mine answers simply and inspiringly 'Make time, make time!'—as if this were as easy as making crumbs out of bread—and does so himself—this fills me with admiration. But, stringing a row of adjectives, as in 'dirty, nasty, objectionable, wretched, little old man,' instead of our simple way of merely adding two certain syllables to the noun meaning old man, does not look like making time to me! The other alternative in

English for such cases (as I equally gather from my friends) is—to make faces! Instead of saying something like ‘Wipe your boot-*ishche*!’—as would be the ominous twist to the Russian word for clumsy big boots heavy with mud—the English people are supposed to convey their attitude of disapproval by a facial expression and tone of voice accompanying ‘those boots!’ This would be all right if they did; but they don’t. Such things are always asked in the politest and kindest manner imaginable (if they are asked at all!) and we never see ‘faces’ on our English friends’ faces. The perfectly justifiable tend of their real thoughts on such occasions remains deep below.

It is like an enchanted circle of mutual influence: innate reticence does not allow the English people sufficient colouring in their speech for fear of making it ‘flowery’ and ‘ridiculous’ (reasons which equally account for the lack of expression in the general English manner of reading aloud or reciting) while their speech—thus having been pruned close to its stem—in its turn does no more send out shoots of tender green filled with springly<sup>1</sup> sap.

<sup>1</sup> I know that there is in English no adjective ‘springly’ deriving of the noun spring (the season of the year, and not a spring in the mattress), but I am unable to manage without it. In Russian we have it in two forms, ancient and modern: *v’eshn’i*, *v’es’enn’i*.; and if there exist such adjectives as ‘wintry’ and ‘autumnal’ I cannot see why should ‘springly’ be regarded as wrong.



So we could not possibly accept this argument as carrying the point in favour of the English language for its being freed of 'unnecessary ballast.' To our mind, this part of the 'ballast' is the very sun-colour of our speech.

The last argument, about English being ever so much easier than Russian, is beyond debating, of course. But if the Russians had the choice offered to them—either to have their language preserved as it is and have it spoken only by a limited number of foreigners, or to have it pruned like the Modern English and to hear it spoken by other peoples all round the world—they would prefer the first, the unpractical alternative! They wouldn't be Russians if they didn't.

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(WITH THE EXCEPTION OF THOSE GIVEN IN RUSSIAN IN THE  
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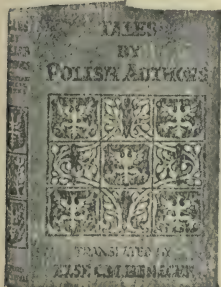
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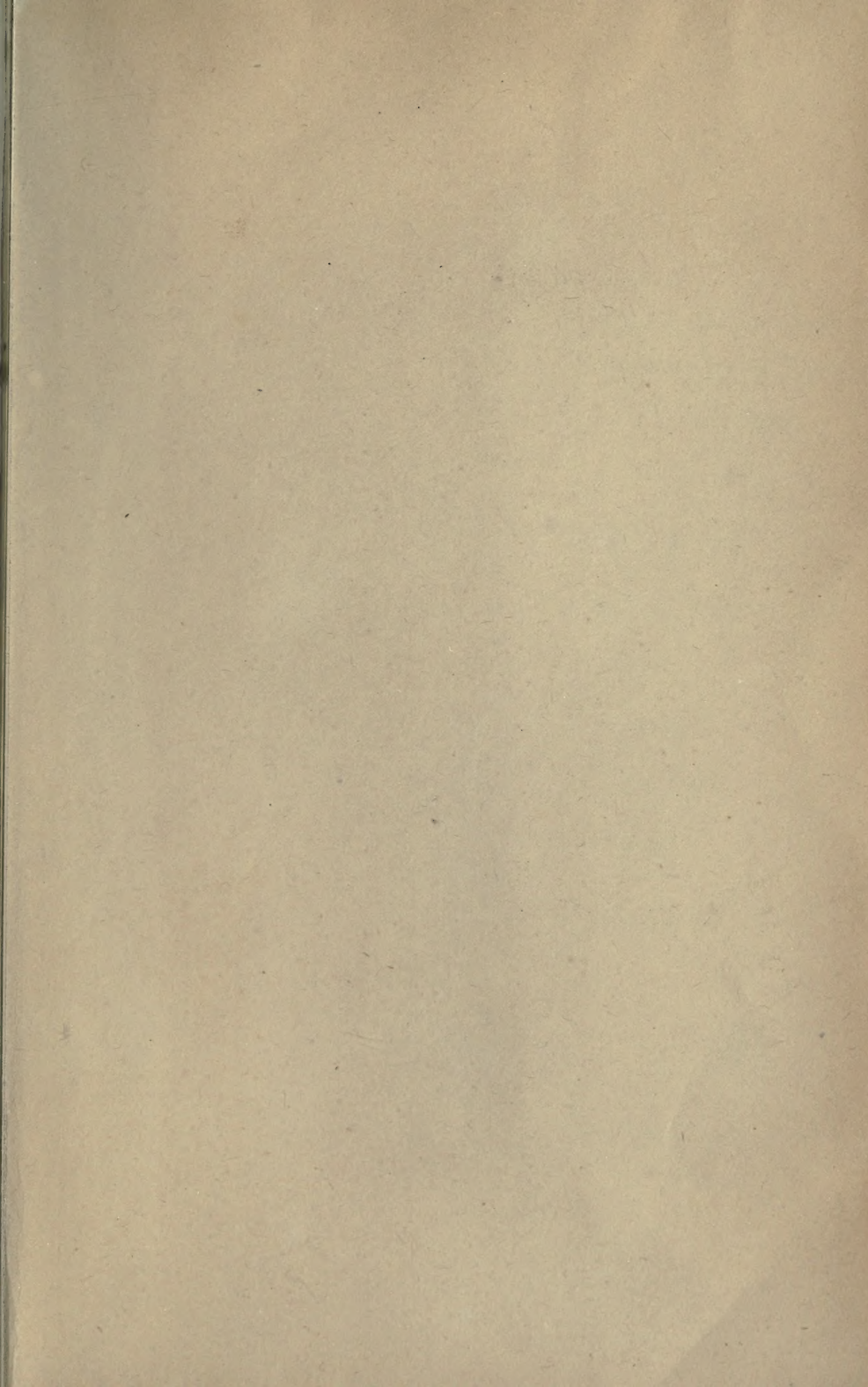
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